







# **The Canterbury Poets**

**EDITED BY WILLIAM SHARP**

**ROBERT BROWNING**



\* \* \* FOR FULL LIST OF THE VOLUMES IN THIS SERIES,  
SEE CATALOGUE AT END OF BOOK.

# NOT TO BE LENT OUT

**D**RAMATIC ROMANCES AND  
LYRICS: AND SORDELLO.  
BY ROBERT BROWNING. WITH  
AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE BY  
E. DIXON.

(1840—1845)

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## INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

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IT is a commonplace that the biography of a modern poet seldom abounds in picturesque elements. Its interest is mainly subjective; and subtle subjective states of thought and feeling elude precise delineation in words. The "life" of the Victorian poet comprises little more than a chronological summary, and a bibliographical list of published or unpublished works, amplified by occasional notes explaining how some particular poem came to be produced at such and such a moment of the poet's career.

The Life of Robert Browning is not exceptional in this respect. After the long chronicle of his writings, comparatively little remains to be told. In a word, we have few data beyond the particulars concerning his parentage and early circumstances, his privately-conducted tuition, the journeys to Italy which served him for a University education, his marriage and residence in Italy at Pisa, Rome, and Florence; the birth of his son, the deaths of his mother, his wife, and his father, and his alternations between London and the Continent in his sister's company during more recent years. Had Browning been compelled to fight his way

through the world to material competence, his personal history would doubtless have gained in picturesqueness what his poetry might have lost in serenity and strength. For the aphorism that poets learn in suffering what they teach in song is, of course, only partially true. Neither Browning nor Tennyson ever wandered in squalid bitterness of spirit through the City of Dreadful Night. But while it is possible that a little severe wrestling with the world might have been salutary to Tennyson's genius, and have made of him a stronger if less mellifluously exquisite poet, of Browning one can only guess, though with some practical certainty, that straitness of material means in youth and early manhood not merely would have toned down somewhat the boisterous optimism of "all's blue," "all's right with the world," but might seriously have warped and thwarted his genius itself. For his was not of the kind that needs to be compressed into a narrow channel to acquire force and volume. He was essentially a spontaneous poet, one of the writers who accomplish their best work when wholly free from carking and sordid anxieties. Not only was his imagination able to work without any such painful stimulus, but it worked of its own unaided impulse, and with the lusty vigour of "an intensest life" which needed the bit rather than the spur. Combining in himself the nervous and solid strength of the Anglo-Saxon stock from which he was descended on his father's side with the austerity and moral uprightness of the Calvinistic Scot and the imaginative dreaminess of the German which came to him through his mother, and

enjoying as he did the saving health of a large sense of humour which was his own, Browning was too strong for material prosperity to spoil—either in his intellectual genius or in that robust native virility of character which informed his life from first to last, and was the “soul-stuff” whence his poetry sprang, which “tried it and turned it forth, sufficiently impressed.”

Browning deliberately trained himself from early life to be a poet, with two somewhat ill assorted aims in view,—to be “Robert Browning, writer of plays,” and to lay “stress . . . on the incidents in the development of a soul: little else is worth study.” He investigated the subjects of his early dramas with characteristic energy, and withal that “lust of finishing” which marks a very conscientious young writer who takes himself seriously, and whose ambition is equalled only by his literary inexperience. Even at twenty years of age, when he prefixed to “Pauline” the significant quotation including the words *Non probo, sed narro*, which struck the key-note of all his future work in this direction, he was aware that his literary powers fell within the dramatic category: but for some years afterwards, if indeed at all, he was not wholly conscious that these were to find their fullest, because most natural, expression only after he had quitted the beaten track of conventional dramatic form, and that he was destined to carve out for himself a new place in literary history. He was to be the poet not of dramatic action but of dramatic situation, uttered through a lyrical or quasi-lyrical medium; and, as he indicated in a note to the



1849 edition of his poems, his poetry was to be "always dramatic in principle, and so many utterances of so many imaginary persons, not mine." Even the two plays which are regarded by competent critics as alike the finest and the most characteristic of all his conventionally dramatic writings—viz., "Pippa Passes" and "A Blot in the 'Scutcheon,"—would probably have lost little or nothing in his hands had they assumed the narrative or quasi-lyrical rather than the stage-play form. For, notwithstanding a range of imagination and of intuitive sympathy Shakespearian in its well-nigh unparalleled height, breadth, and variety, Browning failed of being a "great" dramatist in the sense in which the phrase may be used of Shakespeare and Sophocles; and he failed of this not so much because his strength did not lie in the development of dramatic action; not so much, even, because the lyric form is in itself more or less essentially subjective, and it was in this latter direction that his main success was achieved; but because his cast of mind and personality, vigorous and practical as these were, was, by nature and in spite of training, insufficiently objective. He could not always succeed in restraining the philosopher and metaphysician within him from speaking *in propria persona*. There is, in truth, a certain family likeness among very diverse characters of his, such, say, as the beloved disciple of "A Death in the Desert," Fra Lippo Lippi, Karshish, Pope Innocent XII., the little work-girl of Asolo, the musician Abt Vogler, Ferishtah, and the brutish Caliban,—all relapse at times into their mother-tongue,

Browningese, a speech that bewrayeth. Too essentially dramatic to be a Keats or a Heine, too subjective, too consciously metaphysical to be a Shakespeare, Browning was perforce driven to discover a mode of expression entirely his own; and he found it in the Dramatic Lyric, the Dramatic Idyll, the Dramatic Romance with which we are now familiar. He was not, as some of his most fervent admirers would have us believe, a writer bent upon elaborating in verse a well-considered, carefully organised "message," a philosophico-religious theory of life. There are indeed one or two important general principles or root-ideas which may be traced running like the *motif* of a fugue in and out of almost everything he wrote, from "Pauline" in 1833 [1832] to "Asolando," which was published on the day of his death at Venice, December 12, 1889; but these are after all but few, and their application should not be unduly strained. It is alike the prerogative of and the drawback to manysidedness in a poet, that his works should be capable of more numerous and varied interpretations than could ever have entered into his own calculations.

Browning himself was always more or less indifferent alike to "we critics as sweeps out your chimney" and to "the cackling of human geese." Although he was, perhaps, more humanly sensitive than might be inferred from the famous lines—

" Well, British Public, ye who like me not,  
(God love you !) and will have your proper laugh  
At the dark question, laugh it ! I laugh first," .

—he never swerved by a hair's-breadth from the course which commended itself to his judgment, and perhaps, we may add, to his instincts of defiance, in order to please either the critics or the gosse. Having, as he said, already done his best at any given time, he could not undertake to increase the effort. But, to a man of his cast of mind, the question of his popularity or the reverse probably mattered very little. For the key to the understanding of Browning lies in remembering that his was a mind essentially Gothic, finding its true expression, not, as it were, in the extremely simple form and perfect proportions of the temples of the Acropolis, but as in the soaring branches of fretted stone over-arching the dim, mysterious, fog-wreathen aisles of Westminster Abbey, with their endless suggestion of imaginative detail and of complex life.

"To-day's brief passion limits their range;  
 It settles with the morrow for us and more. \*  
 They are perfect—how else? they shall never change:  
 We are faulty—why not? we have time in store."

The present volume contains (i.) *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics*, published in 1842 and 1845 in *Bells and Pomegranates*, and collected (in the form and order in which they are here given) in the edition of *Poems* issued in 1849; (ii.) The poem "Claret and Tokay," printed in *Bells and Pomegranates*, No. VII. (1845), but not included in the 1849 volume, and reprinted in later editions under the heading of "Nationality in Drinks." The lines beginning "Here's to Nelson's memory," which in the later editions is printed as part of "Nationality in

Drinks," occurs in *Bells and Pomegranates* as part of "Home-Thoughts from Abroad," and is so given in the present volume for the sake of convenience, although not included at all in the edition of 1849. (iii.) The little poem "The Twins," first printed and published, together with a poem of Mrs. Browning's, in 1854. (iv.) "Sordello," according to the text of the first edition of 1840.

No less than thirteen of the five-and-thirty short poems included among *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics* deal with the passion of love, the love of man for woman and of woman for man, set in various keys. Four deal with religious life and aspiration, from the grossly evil temper of the monk in "The Spanish Cloister," and the black treachery of the priest in "The Confessional," through the simple piety of the lad Theocrite, a kind of boyish Pippa, up to the lofty heights of spiritual aspiration in "Saul" (of which it may be noted that only the first portion, as here given, appeared in the earlier editions). "Johannes Agricola in Meditation" may be regarded either as a fine sample of religious mania, or as an effort to show the doctrine of predestination carried out to its extreme logical conclusion. "The Bishop orders his Tomb" can hardly perhaps be classed with the religious poems, inasmuch as the one chief characteristic of the Bishop is an irreligious spirit of the most material kind; it belongs rather to a long list of poems on Italian subjects, of which "In a Gondola" (Venice), "The Italian in England" (the feelings of an Italian political exile under the Austrian domination), and "The Englishman in Italy"

(near Naples) are also to be found in the present edition. Most of the remaining poems in this volume may be regarded as embodying either patriotic feeling or military courage—viz., "Home Thoughts from Abroad" (with "Here's to Nelson's Memory"), "Home Thoughts from the Sea," "How they brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix," stirring verses which it is always disappointing to learn have no historical foundation, "Through the Metidja to Abd-el-Kadr," "Cavalier Tunes," and "Incident of the French Camp." A few others, "Waring," "The Pied Piper," and "Sibrandus Schafnaburgensis," stand by themselves.

Of "Sordello" little need here be said, save that to the general reader it is a much involved poem of unusual difficulty and obscurity, some six thousand lines long, describing with many digressions, historical and other, the "incidents in the development of a soul,"—the soul of a man of whom little or nothing that is positive is known, and who is now remembered only as one of those whom Virgil and Dante met in their journey through Purgatory.\* To describe clearly and succinctly, in six thousand lines of heroic couplets, the development of a soul of any kind is a task from which most writers would shrink. Browning's *tour de force* was not rendered easier for the reader to cope with by the fact of the poet's having selected for such treatment a "soul" that developed several hundred years ago in a restricted area of north-eastern Italy, amid those endless political squabbles and family feuds of Guelfs and Ghibellines which it requires

\* Dante, *Purgatorio*, vl. 61-75.

## INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

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almost a historical specialist's knowledge to understand at all. There are many passages in "Sordello" of rare and enchanting beauty: only they must be looked for. Those who have summoned courage to descend into the depths of the mine and to look about them will not feel that the effort was in vain when they have brought back to the surface such treasures as "That autumn eve was silled," "Dante, pacer of the shore," the description of Venice in Book iii., even perhaps some of the psychological passages in Book vi.

"Lose who may—I still can say,  
Those who win heaven, blest are they!"

E. DIXON.

*Rome, 1897.*



## A BRIEF SUMMARY OF ROBERT BROWNING'S WORKS, Etc.

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*The following brief summary of dates is appended merely  
for convenience of reference. It lays no claim, as is  
apparent, to be an exhaustive bibliography.*

- 1812. May 7. Robert Browning born at Camberwell.
- 1833. "Pauline."
- 1833-4. Browning visited Russia and N. Italy (Asolo).
- 1835. "Paracelsus."
- 1837. "Strafford."
- 1838. Browning visited N. Italy (to Trieste by sea).
- 1840. "Sordello."
- 1841. "Pippa Passes" (Bells and Pomegranates, I.).
- 1842. "King Victor and King Charles" (B. and P., II.).
- "Dramatic Lyrics" (B. and P., III.).
- 1843. "The Return of the Druses" (B. and P., IV.).
- "A Blot in the 'Scutcheon" (B. and P., V.).
- 1844. Browning visited Naples, Livorno, etc.
- "Colombe's Birthday" (B. and P., VI.).
- 1845. "Dramatic Romances and Lyrics" (B. and P.,  
VII.).



1846. "Luria," and "A Soul's Tragedy" (B. and P., VIII.).
- „ Browning married to Elizabeth Barrett. (Mrs. Browning was born in 1809, the *annus mirabilis* which also saw the births of Alfred Tennyson, W. E. Gladstone, John Stuart Blackie, and Oliver Wendell Holmes.)
- 1847-61. The Brownings made their home at Casa Guidi, Florence, with frequent visits elsewhere.
1849. R. W. B. Browning born; Browning's mother died.
- „ "Poems" (reprints only from earlier publications).
1850. "Christmas-Eve and Easter-Day."
- 1851-2. The Brownings wintered at Paris.
- 1853-4. The Brownings wintered in Rome.
1855. "Men and Women" (2 vols.).
1861. Mrs. Browning died at Casa Guidi.
- 1861-89. Browning lived mainly in London, with frequent long tours abroad.
1863. "Poetical Works" published in 3 vols.
1864. "Dramatis Personæ."
1866. Browning's father died at Paris. Miss Browning henceforth lived with her brother.
1868. "Poetical Works" published in 6 vols.
- 1868-9. "The Ring and the Book" (4 vols.).
1871. "Balaustion's Adventure."
- „ "Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau, Saviour of Society."
1872. "Fifine at the Fair."
1873. "Red Cotton Night-Cap Country."

1875. "Aristophanes' Apology."  
" " "The Inn Album."  
1876. "Pacchiarotto," and other poems.  
1877. "The Agamemnon of Æschylus."  
" Miss Ann Egerton Smith, staying with Mr. and  
Miss Browning at La Saisiaz, near Geneva, died  
suddenly of heart-disease.  
1878. "La Saisiaz," and "The Two Poets of Croisic."  
1879-80. "Dramatic Idyls" (2 series).  
1883. "Jocoseria."  
1884. "Ferishtah's Fancies."  
1887. "Parleyings with Certain People of Importance in  
their Day."  
1888-9. "Poetical Works" published in 16 volumes  
(Vol. 17 in 1894).  
1889. Dec. 12. "Asolando."  
" " "Death of Robert Browning at Venice.  
" Dec. 31. Browning buried in Poets' Corner, West-  
minster Abbey.



## DRAMATIC ROMANCES AND LYRICS.

*[Originally published in "Bells and Pomegranates,"  
No. III. (1842), and No VII (1845), and re-  
issued as "Dramatic Romances and Lyrics"  
in POEMS BY ROBERT BROWNING in 1849 ]*

**Inscribed**

**TO**

**JOHN KENYON, ESQ.,**

**IN THE HOPE THAT A RECOLLECTION OF HIS OWN SUCCESSFUL**

**"RHYMED PLEA FOR TOLERANCE"**

**MAY INDUCE HIM TO ADMIT GOOD-NATUREDLY THIS HUMBLER**

**PROSE ONE OF**

**HIS VERY GRATEFUL AND AFFECTIONATE FRIEND,**

**R. B.**

## DRAMATIC ROMANCES AND LYRICS.

### Cavalier Tunes.\*

#### I.—MARCHING ALONG.

KENTISH Sir Byng stood for his King,  
Bidding the crop-headed Parliament swing :  
And, pressing a troop unable to stoop  
And see the rogues flourish and honest folk droop,  
Marched them along, fifty-score strong,  
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.

God for King Charles ! Pym and such carles  
To the Devil that prompts 'em their treasonous parles !  
Cavaliers, up ! Lips from the cup,  
Hands from the pasty, nor bite take nor sup  
Till you're (*Chorus*) *marching along, fifty-score strong,*  
*Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.*

\* Such Poems as the following come properly enough, I suppose, under the head of "Dramatic Pieces;" being, though for the most part Lyric in expression, always Dramatic in principle, and so many utterances of so many imaginary persons, not mine.

## III.

Hampden to Hell, and his obsequies' knell  
 Serve Ilazelrig, Fiennes, and young Harry as well !  
 England, good cheer ! Rupert is near !  
 Kentish and loyalists, keep we not here

*(Cho.) Marching along, fifty-score strong,  
 Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song !*

## IV.

Then, God for King Charles ! Pym and his snarls  
 To the Devil that pricks on such pestilent carles !  
 Hold by the right, you double your night ;  
 So, onward to Nottingham, fresh for the fight,

*(Cho.) March we along, fifty-score strong,  
 Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song !*

## I.--GIVE A ROUSE.

## I.

King Charles, and who'll do him right now ?  
 King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now ?  
 Give a rouse : here's, in Hell's despite now.  
 King Charles !

## II.

Who gave me the goods that went since ?  
 Who raised me the house that sank once ?  
 Who helped me to gold I spent since ?  
 Who found me in wine you drank once ?

*(Cho.) King Charles, and who'll do him right now ?  
 King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now ?  
 Give a rouse : here's, in Hell's despite now,  
 King Charles !*

## III.

To whom used my boy George quaff else,  
By the old fool's side that begot him?  
For whom did he cheer and laugh else,  
While Noll's damned troopers shot him?

*(Cho.) King Charles, and who'll do him right now?  
King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now?  
Give a rouse: here's, in Hell's despite now,  
King Charles!*

## III.—BOOT AND SADDLE.

## I.

Boor, saddle, to horse, and away!  
Rescue my Castle, before the hot day  
Brightens to blue from its silvery gray,

*(Cho.) Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!*

## II.

Ride past the suburbs, asleep as you'd say;  
Many's the friend there, will listen and pray  
"God's luck to gallants that strike up the lay,

*(Cho.) "Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!"*

## III.

Forty miles off, like a roebuck at bay,  
Flouts Castle Brancepath the Roundheads' array:  
Who laughs, "Good fellows ere this, by my fay,

*(Cho.) "Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!"*



## IV.

Who? My wife Gertrude; that, honest and gay,  
Laughs when you talk of surrendering, "Nay!  
"I've better counsellors; what counsel they?"

(*Cho.*) "*Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!*"

**My Last Duchess.**

FERRARA.

THAT's my last Duchess painted on the wall,  
Looking as if she were alive; I call  
That piece a wonder, now: Frà Pandolf's hands  
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.  
Will't please you sit and look at her? I said  
"Frà Pandolf" by design, for never read  
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,  
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,  
But to myself they turned (since none puts by  
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)  
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,  
How such a glance came there; so, not the first  
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not  
Her husband's presence only, called that spot  
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps  
Frà Pandolf chanced to say "Her mantle laps  
"Over my Lady's wrist too much," or "Paint  
"Must never hope to reproduce the faint  
"Half-flush that dies along her throat;" such stuff  
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough  
For calling up that spot of joy. She had  
A heart . . . how shall I say? . . . too soon made  
glad,

Too easily impressed ; she liked whate'er  
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.  
Sir, 'twas all one ! My favour at her breast,  
The dropping of the daylight in the West,  
The bough of cherries some officious fool  
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule  
She rode with round the terrace—all and each  
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,  
Or blush, at least. She thanked men,—good ; but  
thanked

Somehow . . . I know not how . . . as if she ranked  
My gift of a nine hundred years old name  
With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame  
This sort of trifling ? Even had you skill  
In speech—(which I have not)—to make your will  
Quite clear to such an one, and say " Just this  
" Or that in you disgusts me ; here you miss,  
" Or there exceed the mark "—and if she let  
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set  
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,  
—E'en then would be some stooping, and I chuse  
Never to stoop. Oh, Sir, she smiled, no doubt,  
Whene'er I passed her ; but who passed without  
Much the same smile ? This grew ; I gave com-  
mands ;

Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands  
As if alive. Will't please you rise ? We'll meet  
The company below, then. I repeat,  
The Count your Master's known munificence  
Is ample warrant that no just pretence  
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed ;  
Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed  
At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go  
Together down, Sir ! Notice Neptune, tho',  
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,  
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me.

## Count Gismond.

## AIX IN PROVENCE.

## I.

CHRIST God, who savest men, save most  
Of men Count Gismond who saved me !  
Count Gauthier, when he chose his post,  
Chose time and place and company  
To suit it ; when he struck at length  
My honor 'twas with all his strength.

## II.

And doubtlessly ere he could draw  
All points to one, he must have schemed !  
That miserable morning saw  
Few half so happy as I seemed,  
While being dressed in Queen's array  
To give our Tourney prize away.

I thought they loved me, did me grace  
To please themselves ; 'twas all their deed ;  
God makes, or fair or foul, our face ;  
If showing mine so caused to bleed  
My cousins' hearts, they should have dropped  
A word, and straight the play had stopped.

They, too, so beautiful ! Each a queen  
By virtue of her brow and breast ;  
Not needing to be crowned, I mean,  
As I do. E'en when I was dressed,  
Had either of them spoke, instead  
Of glancing sideways with still head !

## V.

But no : they let me laugh, and sing  
My birthday song quite through, adjust  
The last rose in my garland, fling  
A last look on the mirror, trust  
My arms to each an arm of theirs,  
And so descend the castle-stairs—

## VI.

And come out on the morning troop  
Of merry friends who kissed my cheek,  
And called me Queen, and made me stoop  
Under the canopy—(a streak  
That pierced it, of the outside sun,  
Powdered with gold its gloom's soft dun)—

## VII.

And they could let me take my state  
And foolish throne amid applause  
Of all come there to celebrate  
My Queen's day—Oh, I think the cause  
Of much was, they forgot no crowd  
Makes up for parents in their shroud !

## VIII.

Howe'er that be, all eyes were bent  
Upon me, when my cousins cast  
Theirs down ; 'twas time I should present  
The victor's crown, but . . . there, 'twill last  
No long time . . . the old mist again  
Blinds me as then it did. How vain !

## IX.

See ! Gismond's at the gate, in talk  
With his two boys : I can proceed.

Well, at that moment, who should stalk  
 Forth boldly (to my face, indeed)  
 But Cauthier, and he thundered "Stay!"  
 And all stayed. "Bring no crowns, I say!"

## X.

"Bring torches! Wind the penance-sheet  
 "About her! Let her shun the chaste,  
 "Or lay herself before their feet!  
 "Shall she, whose body I embraced  
 "A night long, queen it in the day?  
 "For Honor's sake no crowns, I say!"

## XI.

I? What I answered? As I live,  
 I never fancied such a thing  
 As answer possible to give.  
 What says the body when they spring  
 Some monstrous torture-engine's whole  
 Strength on it? No more says the soul.

## XII.

Till out strode Gismond; then I knew  
 That I was saved. I never met  
 His face before, but, at first view,  
 I felt quite sure that God had set  
 Himself to Satan; who would spend  
 A minute's mistrust on the end?

## XIII.

He strode to Gauthier, in his throat  
 Gave him the lie, then struck his mouth  
 With one back-handed blow that wrote  
 In blood men's verdict there. North, South,  
 East, West, I looked. The lie was dead,  
 And damned, and truth stood up instead.

## XIV.

This glads me most, that I enjoyed  
The heart of the joy, with my content  
In watching Gismond unalloyed  
By any doubt of the event :  
God took that on him—I was bid  
Watch Gismond for my part : I did.

Did I not watch him while he let  
His armourer just brace his greaves,  
Rivet his hauberk, on the fret  
The while ! His foot . . . my memory leaves  
No least stamp out, nor how anon  
He pulled his ringing gauntlets on.

And e'en before the trumpet's sound  
Was finished, prone lay the false Knight,  
Prone as his lie, upon the ground ;  
Gismond flew at him, used no sleight  
Of the sword, but open-breasted drove,  
Cleaving till out the truth he clove.

Which done, he dragged him to my feet  
And said " Here die, but end thy breath  
" In full confession, lest thou fleet  
" From my first, to God's second death !  
" Say, hast thou lied ? " And, " I have lied  
" To God and her," he said, and died.

Then Gismond, kneeling to me, asked  
—What safe my heart holds, tho' no word

Could I repeat now, if I tasked  
My powers for ever, to a third  
Dear even as you are. Pass the rest  
Until I sank upon his breast.

## XIX.

Over my head his arm he flung  
Against the world ; and scarce I felt .  
His sword, that dripped by me and swung,  
A little shifted in its belt,—  
For he began to say the while  
How South our home lay many a mile.

## XX.

So 'mid the shouting multitude  
We two walked forth to never more  
Return. My cousins have pursued  
Their life, untroubled as before  
I vexed them. Gauthier's dwelling-place  
God lighten ! May his soul find grace !

## XXI.

Our elder boy has got the clear  
Great brow ; tho' when his brother's black  
Full eye shows scorn, it . . . Gismond here ?  
And have you brought my tercel back ?  
I just was telling Adela  
How many birds it struck since May.

## Incident of the French Camp.

### I.

You know, we French stormed Ratisbon :  
A mile or so away  
On a little mound, Napoléon  
Stood on our storming-day ;  
With neck out-thrust, you fancy how,  
Legs wide, arms locked behind,  
As if to balance the prone brow  
Oppressive with its mind.

### II.

Just as perhaps he mused " My plans  
" That soar, to earth may fall,  
" Let once my army-leader Lannes,  
" Waver at yonder wall,"—  
Out 'twixt the battery-smokes there flew  
A rider, bound on bound  
Full-galloping ; nor bridle drew  
Until he reached the mound.

### III.

Then off there flung in smiling joy,  
And held himself erect  
By just his horse's mane, a boy :  
You hardly could suspect—  
(So tight he kept his lips compressed,  
Scarce any blood came thro')  
You looked twice ere you saw his breast  
Was all but shot in two.



## IV.

"Well," cried he, "Emperor, by God's grace  
 "We've got you Ratisbon !  
 "The Marshal's in the market-place,  
 "And you'll be there anon  
 "To see your flag-bird flap his vans  
 "Where I, to heart's desire,  
 "Perched him !" The Chief's eye flashed ; his plans  
 Soared up again like fire.

## V.

The Chief's eye flashed ; but presently  
 Softened itself, as sheathes  
 A film the mother eagle's eye  
 When her bruised eaglet breathes :  
 "You're wounded !" "Nay," his soldier's pride  
 Touched to the quick, he said :  
 "I'm killed, Sire !" And, his Chief beside,  
 Smiling the boy fell dead.

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## Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister.

## 1.

GR-R-R—there go, my heart's abhorrence !  
 Water your damned flower-pots, do !  
 If hate killed men, Brother Lawrence,  
 God's blood, would not mine kill you !  
 What ? your myrtle-bush wants trimming ?  
 Oh, that rose has prior claims—  
 Needs its leaden vase filled brimming ?  
 Hell dry you up with its flames !

## II.

At the meal we sit together :  
    *Salve tibi !* I must hear  
Wise talk of the kind of weather,  
Sort of season, time of year :  
*Not a plenteous cork-crop : scarcely*  
    *Dare we hope oak-galls, I doubt :*  
*What's the Latin name for "parsley" ?*  
What's the Greek name for Swine's Snout ?

## III.

Whew ! We'll have our platter burnished,  
Laid with care on our own shelf !  
With a fire-new spoon we're furnished,  
And a goblet for ourself,  
Rinsed like something sacrificial  
Ere 'tis fit to touch our chaps—  
Marked with L. for our initial !  
(He, he ! There his lily snaps !)

## IV.

*Saint*, forsooth ! While brown Dolores  
Squats outside the Convent bank,  
With Sanchicha, telling stories,  
Steeping tresses in the tank,  
Blue-black, lustrous, thick like horsehairs,  
—Can't I see his dead eye glow  
Bright, as 'twere a Barbary corsair's ?  
(That is, if he'd let it show !)

## V.

When he finishes refection,  
Knife and fork he never lays  
Cross-wise, to my recollection,  
As do I, in Jesu's praise.

I, the Trinity illustrate,  
 Drinking watered orange-pulp—  
 In three sips the Arian frustrate;  
 While he drains his at one gulp!

## VI.

Oh, those melons! If he's able  
 We're to have a feast; so nice!  
 One goes to the Abbot's table,  
 All of us get each a slice.  
 How go on your flowers? None double?  
 Not one fruit-sort can you spy?  
 Strange!—And I, too, at such trouble,  
 Keep 'em close-nipped on the sly!

There's a great text in Galatians,  
 Once you trip on it, entails  
 Twenty-nine distinct damnations,  
 One sure, if another fails.  
 If I trip him just a-dying,  
 Sure of Heaven as sure can be,  
 Spin him round and send him flyin'  
 Off to Hell, a Manichee?

Or, my scrofulous French novel,  
 On grey paper with blunt type!  
 Simply glance at it, you grovel  
 Hand and foot in Belial's gripe:  
 If I double down its pages  
 At the woeful sixteenth print,  
 When he gathers his greengages,  
 Ope a sieve and slip it in't?

## IX.

Or, there's Satan I—one might venture  
 Pledge one's soul to him, yet leave  
 Such a flaw in the indenture  
 As he'd miss till, past retrieve,  
 Blasted lay that rose-acacia  
 We're so proud of! *Hy, Zy, Hinc*.  
 'St, there's Vespers! *Plena gra'd*  
*Ave, Virgo!* Gr-r-r—you swine!

## In a Gondola.

*He sings.*

I SEND my heart up to thee, all my heart  
 In this my singing!  
 For the stars help me, and the sea bears part;  
 The very night is clinging  
 Closer to Venice' streets to leave one space  
 Above me, whence thy face  
 May light my joyous heart to thee its dwelling-place.

*She speaks.*

Say after me, and try to say  
 My very words, as if each word  
 Came from you of your own accord,  
 In your own voice, in your own way:  
 "This woman's heart, and soul, and brain  
 "Are mine as much as this gold chain  
 "She bids me wear; which" (say again)  
 "I choose to make by cherishing

"A precious thing, or choose to fling  
 "Over the boat-side, ring by ring."  
 And yet once more say . . . no word more !  
 Since words are only words. Give o'er !  
 Unless you call me, all the same,  
 Familiarly by my pet-name  
 Which, if the Three should hear you call,  
 And me reply to, would proclaim  
 At once our secret to them all :  
 Ask of me, too, command me, blame—  
 Do break down the partition-wall  
 'Twixt us, the daylight world beholds  
 Curtained in dusk and splendid folds.  
 What's left but—all of me to take ?  
 I am the Three's ; prevent them, slake  
 Your thirst ! 'Tis said, the Arab sage  
 In practising with gems can loose  
 Their subtle spirit in his cruce  
 And leave but ashes : so, sweet mage,  
 Leave them my ashes when thy use  
 Sucks out my soul, thy heritage !

*He sings.*

1.

Past we glide, and past, and past !  
 What's that poor Agnese doing  
 Where they make the shutters fast ?  
 Grey Zanobi's just a-wooing  
 To his couch the purchased bride :  
 Past we glide !

2.

Past we glide, and past, and past !  
 Why's the Pucci Palace flaring  
 Like a beacon to the blast ?

Guests by hundreds—not one caring  
If the dear host's neck were wried :  
Past we glide !

*She sings.*

1.

The Moth's kiss, first !  
Kiss me as if you made believe  
You were not sure, this eve,  
How my face, your flower, had pursed  
Its petals up ; so, here and there  
You brush it, till I grow aware  
Who wants me, and wide open burst.

2.

The Bee's kiss, now !  
Kiss me as if you entered gay  
My heart at some noonday,  
A bud that dares not disallow  
The claim, so all is rendered up,  
And passively its shattered cup  
Over your head to sleep I low.

*He sings.*

1.

What are we two ?  
I am a Jew,  
And carry thee, farther than friends can pursue,  
To a feast of our tribe,  
Where they need thee to bribe  
The devil that blasts them unless he imbibe  
Thy . . . Shatter the vision for ever ! And now,  
As of old, I am I, Thou art Thou !

## 2.

Say again, what we are ?  
 The sprite of a star,  
 I lure thee above where the Destinies bar  
 My plumes their full play  
 Till a ruddier ray  
 Than my pale one announce there is withering  
     away  
 Some . . . Shatter the vision for ever ! And now,  
 As of old, I am I, Thou art Thou !

*He muses.*

Oh, which were best, to roam or rest ?  
 The land's lap or the water's breast ?  
 To sleep on yellow millet-sheaves,  
 Or swim in lucid shallows, just  
 Eluding water-lily leaves,  
 An inch from Death's black fingers, thrust  
 To lock you, whom release he must ;  
 Which life were best on Summer eves ?

*He speaks, musing.*

Lie back ; could thought of mine improve you ?  
 From this shoulder let there spring  
 A wing ; from this, another wing ;  
 Wings, not legs and feet, shall move you !  
 Snow-white must they spring, to blend  
 With your flesh, but I intend  
 They shall deepen to the end,  
 Broader, into burning gold,  
 Till both wings crescent-wise enfold  
 Your perfect self, from 'neath your feet  
 To o'er your head, where, lo, they meet  
 As if a million sword-blades hurled  
 Defiance from you to the world !

Rescue me thou, the only real !  
And scare away this mad Ideal  
That came, nor notions to depart !  
Thanks ! Now, stay ever as thou art !

*Still he muses.*

I.

What if the Three should catch at last  
Thy serenader ? While there's cast  
Paul's cloak about my head, and fast  
Gian pinions me, Himself has past  
His stylet thro' my back ; I reel ;  
And . . . is it Thou I feel ?

2.

They trail me, these three godless knaves,  
Past every church that sains and saves,  
Nor stop till, where the cold sea raves  
By Lido's wet accursed graves,  
They scoop mine, roll me to its brink,  
And . . . on Thy breast I sink !

*She replies, musing.*

Dip your arm o'er the boat-side, elbow-deep,  
As I do : thus : were Death so unlike Sleep,  
Caught this way ? Death's to fear from flame, or steel,  
Or poison doubtless ; but from water—feel !

Go find the bottom ! Would you stay me ? There !  
Now pluck a great blade of that ribbon-grass  
To plait in where the foolish jewel was,  
I flung away : since you have praised my hair,  
'Tis proper to be choice in what I wear.



*He speaks.*

Row home? must we row home? Too surely  
 Knew I where its front's demurely  
 Over the Giudecca piled;  
 Window just with window mating,  
 Door on door exactly waiting,  
 All's the set face of a child:  
 But behind it, where's a trace  
 Of the staidness and reserve,  
 And formal lines without a curve,  
 In the same child's playing-face?  
 No two windows look one way  
 O'er the small sea-water thread  
 Below them. Ah, the autumn day  
 I, passing, saw you overhead!  
 First, out a cloud of curtain blew,  
 Then, a sweet cry, and last, came you—  
 To catch your loory that must needs  
 Escape just then, of all times then,  
 To peck a tall plant's fleecy seeds,  
 And make me happiest of men.  
 I scarce could breathe to see you reach  
 So far back o'er the balcony,  
 (To catch him ere he climbed too high  
 Above you in the Smyrna peach)  
 That quick the round smooth cord of gold,  
 This coiled hair on your head, unrolled,  
 Fell down you like a gorgeous snake  
 The Roman girls were wont, of old,  
 When Rome there was, for coolness' sake  
 To let lie curling o'er their bosoms.  
 Dear loory, may his beak retain  
 Ever its delicate rose stain  
 As if the wounded lotus-blossoms  
 Had marked their thief to know again!

Stay longer yet, for others' sake  
Than mine ! what should your chamber do ?  
—With all its rarities that ache  
In silence while day lasts, but wake  
At night-time and their life renew,  
Suspended just to pleasure you  
—That brought against their will together  
These objects, and, while day lasts, weave  
Around them such a magic tether  
That they look dumb : your harp, believe,  
With all the sensitive tight strings  
That dare not speak, now to itself  
Breathes slumbrously as if some elf  
Went in and out the chords, his wings  
Make murmur wheresoe'er they graze,  
As an angel may, between the maze  
Of midnight palace-pillars, on  
And on, to sow God's plagues have gone  
Through guilty glorious Babylon.  
And while such murmurs flow, the nymph  
Bends o'er the harp-top from her shell,  
As the dry limpet for the lymph  
Come with a tune he knows so well.  
And how your statues' hearts must swell !  
And how your pictures must descend  
To see each other, friend with friend !  
Oh, could you take them by surprise,  
You'd find Schidone's eager Duke  
Doing the quaintest courtesies  
To that prim Saint by Haste-thee-Luke :  
And, deeper into her rock den,  
Bold Castelfranco's Magdalen  
You'd find retreated from the ken  
Of that robed counsel-keeping Ser—  
As if the Tizian thinks of her,  
And is not, rather, gravely bent

On seeing for himself what toys  
 Are these, his progeny invent,  
 What litter now the board employs  
 Where he signed a document  
 That got him murdered ! Each enjoys  
 Its night so well, you cannot break  
 The sport up, so, indeed must make  
 More stay with me, for others' sake.

*She speaks.*

1.

To-morrow, if a harp-string, say,  
 Is used to tie the jasmine back  
 That overflows my room with sweets,  
 Contrive your Zorzi somehow meets  
 My Zanze : if the ribbon's black,  
 The Three are watching ; keep away.

2.

Your gondola—let Zorzi wreath  
 A mesh of water-weeds about  
 Its prow, as if he unaware  
 Had struck some quay or bridge-foo' stair ;  
 That I may throw a p.p. out  
 As you and he go underneath.

There's Zanze's vigilant taper ; safe are we !  
 Only one minute more to-night with me ?  
 Resume your past self of a month ago !  
 Be you the bashful gallant, I will be  
 The lady with the colder breast than snow :  
 Now bow you, as becomes, nor touch my hand  
 More than I touch yours when I step to land,  
 And say, All thanks, Siora !—

Heart to heart,

And lips to lips ! Yet once more, ere we part,  
Clasp me, and make me thine, as mine thou art !

*He is surprised, and stabbed.*

It was ordained to be so, Sweet,—and best  
Comes now, beneath thine eyes, and on thy breast.  
Still kiss me ! Care not for the cowards ! Care  
Only to put aside thy beauteous hair  
My blood will hurt ! The Three, I do not scorn  
To death, because they never lived : but I  
Have lived indeed, and so—(yet one more kiss)—can  
die !

### Artemis Prologuizes.

I AM a Goddess of the ambrosial courts,  
And save by Here, Queen of Pride, surpassed  
By none whose temples whiten thus the world  
Thro' Heaven I roll my lucid moon along ;  
I shed in Hell o'er my pale people peace ;  
On Earth, I, caring for the creatures, guard  
Each pregnant yellow wolf and fox-bitch sleek,  
And every feathered mother's callow brood,  
And all that love green haunts and loneliness.  
Of men, the chaste adore me, hanging crowns  
Of poppies red to blackness, bell and stem,  
Upon my image at Athenai here ;  
And this dead Youth, Asclepios bends above,  
Was dearest to me. He my buskined step  
To follow thro' the wild-wood leafy ways,  
And chase the panting stag, or swift with darts  
Stop the swift ounce, or lay the leopard low,

Neglected homage to another God :  
Whence Aphrodite, by no midnight smoke  
Of tapers lulled, in jealousy dispatched  
A noisome list that, as the gadbee stings,  
Possessed his stepdame Phaidra for himself  
The son of Theseus her great absent spouse.  
Hippolotos exclaiming in his rage  
Against the miserable Queen, she judged  
Life insupportable, and, pricked at heart  
An Amazonian stranger's race should dare  
To scorn her, perished by the murderous cord :  
Yet, ere she perished, blasted in a scroll  
The fame of him her swerving made not swerve,  
Which Theseus read, returning, and believed,  
So, exiled in the blindness of his wrath,  
The man without a crime, who, last as first,  
Loyal, divulged not to his sire the truth.  
Now Theseus from Poseidon had obtained  
That of his wishes should be granted Three,  
And this he imprecated straight—alive  
May ne'er Hippolotos reach other lands !  
Poseidon heard, ai, ai ! And scarce the prince  
Had stepped into the fixed boots of the car,  
That give the feet a stay against the strength  
Of the Hænetian horses, and l around  
His body flung the reins, and urged their speed  
Along the rocks and shingles of the shore,  
When from the gaping wave a monster flung  
His obscene body in the coursers' path !  
These, mad with terror as the sea-bull sprawled  
Wallowing about their feet, lost care of him  
That reared them ; and the master-chariot-pole  
Snapping beneath their plunges like a reed,  
Hippolotos, whose feet were trammled fast,  
Was yet dragged forward by the circling rein  
Which either hand directed ; nor was quenched

The frenzy of that flight before each trace,  
Wheel-spoke and splinter of the woeful car,  
Each boulder-stone, sharp stub, and spiny shell,  
Huge fish-bone wrecked and wreathed amid the sands  
On that detested beach, was bright with blood  
And morsels of his flesh : then fell the steeds  
Head-foremost, crashing in their mooned fronts,  
Shivering with sweat, each white eye horror-fixed.  
His people, who had witnessed all afar,  
Bore back the ruins of Hippolotos.  
But when his sire, too swoln with pride, rejoiced,  
(Indomitable as a man foredoomed)  
That vast Poseidon had fulfilled his prayer,  
I, in a flood of glory visible,  
Stood o'er my dying votary, and deed  
By deed revealed, as all took place, the truth.  
Then Theseus lay the woefullest of men,  
And worthily; but ere the death-veils hid  
His face, the murdered prince full pardon breathed  
To his rash sire. Whereat Athenai wails.  
So I, who ne'er forsake my votaries,  
Lest in the cross-way none the honey-cake  
Should tender, nor pour out the dog's hot life;  
Lest at my fane the priests disconsolate  
Should dress my image with some faded poor  
Few crowns, made favours of, nor dare object  
Such slackness to my worshippers who turn  
The trusting heart and loaded hand elsewhere,  
As they had climbed Oulumpo to report  
Of Artemis and nowhere found her throne—  
I interposed: and, this eventful night,  
While round the funeral pyre the populace  
Stood with fierce light on their black robes that blind  
Each sobbing head, while yet their hair they clipped  
O'er the dead body of their withered prince,  
And, in his palace, Theseus prostrated

On the cold hearth, his brow cold as the slab  
'Twas bruised on, groaned away the heavy grief—  
As the pyre fell, and down the cross logs crashed,  
Sending a cloud of sparkles thro' the night,  
And the gay fire, elate with mastery,  
Towered like a serpent o'er the clotted jars  
Of wine, dissolving oils and frankincense,  
And splendid gums, like gold,—my potency  
Conveyed the perished man to my retreat  
In the thrice venerable forest here.  
And this white-bearded Sage who squeezes now  
The berried plant, is Phoibos' son of fame,  
Asclepios, whom my radiant brother taught  
The doctrine of each herb and flower and root,  
To know their secret'st virtue and express  
The saving soul of all—who so has soothed  
With lavers the torn brow and murdered cheeks,  
Composed the hair and brought its gloss again,  
And called the red bloom to the pale skin back,  
And laid the strips and jagged ends of flesh  
Even once more, and slacked the sinew's knot  
Of every tortured limb—that now he lies  
As if mere sleep possessed him underneath  
These interwoven oaks and pines. Oh, cheer,  
Divine presenter of the healing rod  
Thy snake, with ardent throat and lulling eye,  
Twines his lithe spires around ! I say, much cheer !  
Proceed thou with thy wisest pharmacies !  
And ye, white crowd of woodland sister-nymphs,  
Ply, as the Sage directs, these buds and leaves  
That strew the turf around the Twain ! While I  
Await, in fitting silence, the event.

Waring.

I.

1.

WHAT'S become of Waring  
Since he gave us all the slip,  
Chose land-travel or seafaring,  
Boots and chest, or staff and scrip,  
Rather than pace up and down  
Any longer London-town?

II.

Who'd have guessed it from his lip,  
Or his brow's accustomed bearing,  
On the night he thus took ship,  
Or started landward?—little caring  
For us, it seems, who supped together,  
(Friends of his too, I remember)  
And walked home thro' the merry weather,  
The snowiest in all December;  
I left his arm that night myself  
For what's-his-name's, the new prose-poet,  
That wrote the book there, on the shelf—  
How, forsooth, was I to know it  
If Waring meant to glide away  
Like a ghost at break of day?  
Never looked he half so gay!

III.

He was prouder than the Devil:  
How he must have cursed our revel!  
Ay, and many other meetings,  
Indoor visits, outdoor greetings.



As up and down he paced this London,  
 With no work done, but great works undone,  
 Where scarce twenty knew his name.  
 Why not, then, have earlier spoken,  
 Writter, bustled? Who's to blame  
 If your silence kept unbroken?  
 "True, but there were sundry jottings,  
 "Stray-leaves, fragments, blurs and blottings,  
 "Certain first steps were achieved  
 "Already which"—(is that your meaning?)  
 "Had well borne out whoe'er believed  
 "In more to come!" But who goes gleaning  
 Hedge-side chance-blades, while full-sheaved  
 Stand cornfields by him? Pride, o'erweening  
 Pride alone, puts forth such claims  
 O'er the day's distinguished names.

## IV.

Meantime, how much I loved him,  
 I find out now I've lost him:  
 I, who cared not if I moved him,  
 Who could so carelessly accost him,  
 Henceforth never shall get free  
 Of his ghostly company,  
 His eyes that just a little wink  
 As deep I go into the merit  
 Of this and that distinguished spirit—  
 His cheeks' raised colour, soon to sink,  
 As long I dwell on some stupendous  
 And tremendous (Heaven defend us!)  
 Monstr'-inform'-ingens-horrend-ous  
 Demoniaco-seraphic  
 Penman's latest piece of graphic.  
 Nay, my very wrist grows warm  
 With his dragging weight of arm!  
 E'en so, swimmingly appears,

Thro' one's after-supper musings,  
 Some lost Lady of old years,  
 With her beauteous vain endeavour,  
 And goodness unrepaid as ever ;  
 The face, accustomed to refusings,  
 We, puppies that we were. . . . Oh never  
 Surely, nice of conscience, scrupled  
 Being aught like false, forsooth, to ?  
 Telling aught bût honest truth to ?  
 What a sin, had we centupled  
 Its possessor's grace and sweetness !  
 No ! she heard in its completeness  
 Truth, for truth's a weighty matter,  
 And, truth at issue, we can't flatter !  
 Well, 'tis done with : she's exempt  
 From damning us thro' such a sally ;  
 And so she glides, as down a valley,  
 Taking up with her contempt,  
 Past our reach ; and in, the flowers  
 Shut her unregarded hours.

v.

Oh, could I have him back once more,  
 This Waring, but one half-day more !  
 Back, with the quiet face of yore,  
 So hungry for acknowledgment  
 Like mine ! I'd fool him to his bent !  
 Feed, should not he, to heart's content ?  
 I'd say, "to only have conceived  
 "Your great works, tho' they ne'er make progress,  
 "Surpasses all we've yet achieved !"  
 I'd lie so, I should be believed.  
 I'd make such havoc of the claims  
 Of the day's distinguished names  
 To feast him with, as feasts an ogress  
 Her sharp-toothed golden-crowned child !

Or, as one feasts a creature rarely  
Captured here, unreconciled  
To capture ; and completely gives  
Its peevish humours licence, barely  
Requiring that it lives.

## VI.

Ichabod, Ichabod,  
The glory is departed !  
Travels Waring East away ?  
Who, of knowledge, by hearsay,  
Reports a man upstart  
Somewhere as a God,  
Hordes grown European-hearted,  
Millions of the wild made tame  
On a sudden at his fame ?  
In Vishnu-land what Avatar ?  
Or who, in Moscow, toward the Czar,  
With the demurest of footfalls  
Over the Kremlin's pavement, bright  
With serpentine and syenite,  
Steps, with five other Generals,  
That simultaneously take snuff,  
For each to have pretext enough  
To kerchiefwise unfurl his sash  
Which, softness' self, is yet the stuff  
To hold fast where a steel chain snaps,  
And leave the grand white neck no gash ?  
Waring, in Moscow, to those rough  
Cold northern natures borne, perhaps,  
Like the lambwhite maiden dear  
From the circle of mute kings,  
Unable to repress the tear,  
Each as his sceptre down he flings,  
To Dian's fane at Taurica,  
Where now a captive priestess, she alway

Mingles her tender grave Hellenic speech  
 With theirs, tuned to the hailstone-beaten beach,  
 As pours some pigeon, from the myrrhy lands  
 Rapt by the whirlblast to fierce Scythian strands  
 Where breed the swallows, her melodious cry  
 Amid their barbarous twitter !  
 In Russia? Never ! Spain were fitter !  
 Ay, most likely 'tis in Spain  
 That we and Waring meet again —  
 Now, while he turns down that cool narrow lane  
 Into the blackness, out of grave Madrid  
 All fire and shine—abrupt as when there's slid  
 Its stiff gold blazing pall  
 From some black coffin-lid.  
 Or, best of all,  
 I love to think  
 The leaving us was just a feint ;  
 Back here to London did he slink ;  
 And now works on without a wink  
 Of sleep, and we are on the brink  
 Of something great in fresco-paint :  
 Some garret's ceiling, walls and floor,  
 Up and down and o'er and o'er  
 He splashes, as none splashed before  
 Since great Caldara Polidore :  
 Or Music means this land of ours  
 Some favor yet, to pity won  
 By Purcell from his Rosy Bowers,—  
 " Give me my so long promised son,  
 " Let Waring end what I begun !"  
 Then down he creeps and out he steals ;  
 Only when the night conceals  
 His face—in Kent 'tis cherry-time,  
 Or, hops are picking ; or, at prime  
 Of March, he wanders as, too happy,  
 Years ago when he was young,

Some mild eve when woods grew happy,  
 And the early moths had sprung  
 To life from many a trembling sheath  
 Woven the warm boughs beneath;  
 While small birds said to themselves  
 What should soon be actual song,  
 And young gnats, by tens and twelves,  
 Made as if they were the throng  
 That crowd around and carry aloft  
 The sound they have nursed, so sweet and pure,  
 Out of a myriad noises soft,  
 Into a tone that can endure  
 Amid the noise of a July noon,  
 When all God's creatures crave their boon,  
 All at once and all in tune,  
 And get it, happy as Waring then,  
 Having first within his ken  
 What a man might do with men,  
 And far too glad, in the even-glow,  
 To mix with your world he meant to take  
 Into his hand, he told you, so—  
 And out of it his world to make,  
 To contract and to expand  
 As he shut or opened his hand.  
 Oh, Waring, what's so really he?  
 A clear stage and a crowd to see!  
 Some Garrick—say—out shall not he  
 The heart of Hamlet's mystery pluck?  
 Or, where most unclean beasts are rife,  
 Some Junius—am I right?—shall tuck  
 His sleeve, and out with flaying-knife!  
 Some Chatterton shall have the luck  
 Of calling Rowley into life!  
 Some one shall somehow run a muck  
 With this old world, for want of strife  
 Sound asleep: contrive, contrive

To rouse us, Waring ! Who's alive ?  
 Our men scarce seem in earnest now :  
 Distinguished names !—but 'tis, somehow,  
 As if they played at being names  
 Still more distinguished, like the games  
 Of children. Turn our sport to earnest  
 With a visage of the sternest !  
 Bring the real times back, confessed  
 Still better than our very best !

II.

I.

“ WHEN I last saw Waring . . .  
 (How all turned to him who spoke—  
 You saw Waring ? Truth or joke ?  
 In land-travel, or sea-faring ?)

II

“ We were sailing by Trieste,  
 “ Where a day or two we harboured :  
 “ A sunset was in the West,  
 “ When, looking over the vessel's side,  
 “ One of our company espied  
 “ A sudden speck to larboard.  
 “ And, as a sea-duck flies and swims  
 “ At once, so came the light craft up,  
 “ With its sole lateen sail that trims  
 “ And turns (the water round its rims  
 “ Dancing, as round a sinking cup)  
 “ And by us like a fish it curled,  
 “ And drew itself up close beside,  
 “ Its great sail on the instant furled,  
 “ And o'er its planks, a shrill voice cried,  
 “ (A neck as bronzed as a Lascar's)

" ' Buy wine of us, you English Brig ?  
 " ' Or fruit, tobacco and cigars ?  
 " ' A Port for you to Triest ?  
 " ' Without one, look you ne'er so big,  
 " ' They'll never let you up the bay !  
 " ' We natives should know best.'  
 " I turned, and ' just those fellows' way,'  
 " Our captain said, ' The 'long-shore thieves  
 " ' Are laughing at us in their sleeves.'

## III.

" In truth, the boy leaned laughing back ;  
 " And one, half-hidden by his side  
 " Under the furled sail, soon I spied,  
 " With great grass hat, and kerchief black,  
 " Who looked up, with his kingly throat,  
 " Said somewhat, while the other shook  
 " His hair back from his eyes to look  
 " Their longest at us ; then the boat,  
 " I know not how, turned sharply round,  
 " Laying her whole side on the sea  
 " As a leaping fish does ; from the lee  
 " Into the weather, cut somehow  
 " Her sparkling path beneath our bow ;  
 " And so went off, as with a bound,  
 " Into the rose and golden half  
 " Of the sky, to overtake the sun,  
 " And reach the shore, like the sea-calf  
 " Its singing cave ; yet I caught one  
 " Glance ere away the boat quite passed,  
 " And neither time nor toil could mar  
 " Those features : so I saw the last  
 " Of Waring !"—You ? Oh, never star  
 Was lost here, but it rose afar !  
 Look East, where whole new thousands are !  
 In Vishnu-land what Avatar ?

Rudel to the Lady of Tripoli.

I.

I KNOW a Mount, the gracious Sun perceives  
 First when he visits, last, too, when he leaves  
 The world ; and, vainly favored, it repays  
 The day-long glory of his steadfast gaze  
 By no change of its large calm front of snow.  
 And underneath the Mount, a Flower I know,  
 He cannot have perceived, that changes ever  
 At his approach ; and, in the lost endeavour  
 To live his life, has parted, one by one,  
 With all a flower's true graces, for the grace  
 Of being but a foolish mimic sun,  
 With ray-like florets round a disk-like face.  
 Men nobly call by many a name the Mount,  
 As over many a land of theirs its large  
 Calm front of snow like a triumphal targe  
 Is reared, and still with old names, fresh ones vie,  
 Each to its proper praise and own account :  
 Men call the Flower, the Sunflower, sportively.

II.

Oh, Angel of the East, one, one gold look  
 Across the waters to this twilight nook,  
 —The far sad waters, Angel, to this nook !

III.

Dear Pilgrim, art thou for the East indeed ?  
 Go ! Saying ever as thou dost proceed,  
 That I, French Rudel, choose for my device  
 A sunflower outspread like a sacrifice  
 Before its idol. See ! These inexpert  
 And hurried fingers could not fail to hurt



The woven picture ; 'tis a woman's skill  
 Indeed ; but nothing baffled me, so, ill  
 Or well, the work is finished. Say, men feed  
 On songs ' sing, and therefore bask the bees  
 On my flower's breast as on a platform broad.  
 But, as the flower's concern is not for these  
 But solely for the sun, so men applaud  
 In vain this Rudel, he not looking here  
 But to the East—the East! Go, say this, Pilgrim  
 dear !

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### Cristina.

#### I.

SHE should never have looked at me,  
 If she meant I should not love her !  
 There are plenty . . men, you call such,  
 I suppose . . she may discover  
 All her soul to, if she pleases,  
 And yet leave much as she found them :  
 But I in not so, and she knew it  
 When she fixed me, glancing round them.

#### II.

What ? To fix me thus meant nothing ?  
 But I can't tell . . there's my weakness . .  
 What her look said !—no vile cant, sure,  
 About " need to strew the bleakness  
 " Of some lone shore with its pearl-seed,  
 " That the Sea feels"—no " strange yearning  
 " That such souls have, most to lavish  
 " Where there's chance of least returning."

## III.

Oh, we're sunk enough here, God knows !  
But not quite so sunk that moments,  
Sure tho' seldom, are denied us,  
When the spirit's true endowments  
Stand out plainly from its false ones,  
And apprise it if pursuing  
Or the right way or the wrong way,  
To its triumph or undoing.

## IV.

There are flashes struck from midnights,  
There are fire flames noondays kindle,  
Whereby piled-up honours perish,  
Whereby sworn ambitions dwindle,  
While just this or that poor impulse,  
Which for once had play unstifled,  
Seems the sole work of a life-time  
That away the rest have trifled.

## V.

Doubt you if, in some such moment,  
As she fixed me, she felt clearly,  
Ages past the soul existed,  
Here an age 'tis resting merely,  
And hence, fleets again for ages :  
While the true end, sole and single,  
It stops here for is, this love-way,  
With some other soul to mingle ?

## VI.

Else it loses what it lived for,  
And eternally must lose it ;  
Better ends may be in prospect,  
Deeper blisses, if you choose it,

But this life's end and this love-bliss  
 Have been lost here. Doubt you whether  
 This sin' felt, as, looking at me,  
 Mine and her souls rushed together?

## VII

Oh, observe! Of course, next moment,  
 The world's honors, in derision,  
 Trampled out the light for ever:  
 Never fear but there's provision  
 Of the Devil's to quench knowledge  
 Lest we walk the earth in rapture!  
 —Making those who catch God's secret  
 Just so much more prize their capture.

## VIII.

Such am I: the secret's mine now!  
 She has lost me—I have gained her!  
 Her soul's mine: and, thus, grown perfect,  
 I shall pass my life's remainder,  
 Life will just hold out the proving  
 Both our powers, alone and blended—  
 And then, come the next life quickly!  
 This world's use will have been ended

## I.—Madhouse Cell.

JOHANNES AGRICOLA IN MEDITATION.

THERE'S Heaven above, and night by night,  
 I look right through its gorgeous roof;  
 No sun and moons though e'er so bright  
 Avail to stop me; splendor-proof

I keep the broods of stars aloof :  
 For I intend to get to God,  
     For 'tis to God I speed so fast,  
 For in God's breast, my own abode,  
     Those shoals of dazzling glory past,  
 I lay my spirit down at last.  
 I lie where I have always lain,  
     God smiles as he has always smiled ;  
 Ere suns and moons could wax and wane,  
     Ere stars were thundergirt, or piled  
 The Heavens, God thought on me his child ;  
 Ordained a life for me, arrayed  
     Its circumstances, every one  
 To the minutest ; ay, God said  
     'This head this hand should rest upon  
 Thus, ere he fashioned star or sun.  
 And having thus created me,  
     Thus rooted me, he bade me grow,  
 Guiltless for ever, like a tree  
     That buds and blooms, nor seeks to know  
     The law by which it prospers so :  
 But sure that thought and word and deed  
     All go to swell his love for me,  
 Me, made because that love had need  
     Of something irrevocably  
 Pledged solely its content to be.  
 Yes, yes, a tree which must ascend,—  
     No poison-gourd foredoomed to stoop !  
 I have God's warrant, could I blend  
     All hideous sins, as in a cup,  
 To drink the mingled venoms up,  
 Secure my nature will convert  
     The draught to blossoming gladness fast,  
 While sweet dews turn to the gourd's hurt,  
     And bloat, and while they bloat it, blast,  
 As from the first its lot was cast.

For as I lie, smiled on, full fed  
 By unexhausted power to bless,  
 I gaze below on Hell's fierce bed,  
 And those its waves of flame oppress,  
 Swarming in ghastly wretchedness;  
 Whose life on earth aspired to be  
 One altar-smoke, so pure!—to win  
 If not love like God's love to me,  
 At least to keep his anger in,  
 And all their striving turned to sin!  
 Priest, doctor, hermit, monk grown white  
 With prayer, the broken-hearted nun,  
 The martyr, the wan acolyte,  
 The incense-swinging child,—undone  
 Before God fashioned star or sun!  
 God, whom I praise; how could I praise,  
 If such as I might understand,  
 Make out, and reckon on, his ways,  
 And bargain for his love, and stand,  
 Paying a price, at his right hand?

## II.—~~Madhouse~~ Cell.

PORPHYRIA'S LOVER.

THE rain set early in to-night,  
 The sullen wind was soon awake,  
 It tore the elm-tops down for spite,  
 And did its worst to vex the lake,  
 I listened with heart fit to break;  
 When ghded in Porphyria: straight  
 She shut the cold out and the storm,

And kneeled and made the chicerless grate  
Blaze up, and all the cottage warm ;  
Which done, she rose, and from her form  
Withdrew the dripping cloak and shawl,  
And laid her soiled gloves by, untied  
Her hat and let the damp hair fall,  
And, last, she sate down by my side  
And called me. When no voice replied,  
She put my arm about her wrist,  
And made her smooth white shoulder bare  
And all her yellow hair displaced,  
And, stooping, made my cheek lie there,  
And spread o'er all her yellow hair,  
Murmuring how she loved me ; she  
Too weak, for all her heart's endcavour,  
To set its struggling passion free  
From pride, and vainer ties dissever,  
And give herself to me for ever :  
But passion sometimes would prevail,  
Nor could to-night's gay feast restrain  
A sudden thought of one so pale  
For love of her, and all in vain ;  
So, she was come through wind and rain.  
Lie sure I looked up at her eyes  
Proud, very proud ; at last I knew  
Porphyria worshipped me ; surprise  
Made my heart swell, and still it grew  
While I debated what to do.  
That moment she was mine, mine, fail,  
Perfectly pure and good : I found  
A thing to do, and all her hair  
In one long yellow string I wound  
Three times her little throat around,  
And strangled her. No pain felt she ;  
I am quite sure she felt no pain.  
As a shut bud that holds a bee

I warily oped her lids ; again  
 Laughed the blue eyes without a stain.  
 And I untightened next the tress  
 About her neck ; her cheek once more  
 Blushed bright beneath my burning kiss :  
 I propped her head up as before,  
 Only, this time *my* shoulder bore  
 Her head, which droops upon it still :  
 The smiling rosy little head,  
 So glad it has its utmost will,  
 That all it scorned at once is fled,  
 And I, its love, am gained instead !  
 Porphyria's love : she guessed not how  
 Her darling one wish would be heard.  
 And thus we sit together now,  
 And all night long we have not stirred,  
 And yet God has not said a word !

### Through the Mctidja to Abd-el-Kadr,

1872.

I.

As I ride, as I ride,  
 With a full heart for my guide,  
 So its tide rocks my side,  
 As I ride, as I ride,  
 That, as I were double-eyed,  
 He, in whom our Tribes confide,  
 Is descried, ways untried  
 As I ride, as I ride.

As I ride, as I ride  
To our Chief and his Allied,  
Who dares chide my heart's pride  
As I ride, as I ride?  
(Or are witnesses denied—  
Through the desert waste and wide  
Do I glide unespied  
As I ride, as I ride?)

## III.

As I ride, as I ride,  
When an inner voice has cried,  
The sands slide, nor abide  
(As I ride, as I ride)  
O'er each visioned Homicide  
That came vaunting (has he lied?)  
To reside—where he died,  
As I ride, as I ride.

## IV.

As I ride, as I ride,  
Ne'er has spur my swift horse plied,  
Yet his hide, streaked and pied,  
As I ride, as I ride,  
Shows where sweat has sprung and dried,  
—Zebra-footed, ostrich-thighed—  
How has vied stride with stride  
As I ride, as I ride!

## V.

As I ride, as I ride,  
Could I loose what Fate has tied,  
Ere I pried, she should hide  
As I ride, as I ride,



All that's meant me : satisfied  
 When the Prophet and the Bards  
 Stop veins I'd have subside  
 As I ride, as I ride !

## The Pied Piper of Hamelin;

A CHILD'S STORY.

(WRITTEN FOR, AND INSCRIBED TO, W. M. THE YOUNGER)

### I

HAMELIN Town's in Brunswick,  
 By famous Hanover city;  
 The river Weser, deep and wide,  
 Washes its wall on the southern side;  
 A pleasanter spot you never spied;  
 But, when begins my ditty,  
 Almost five hundred years ago,  
 To see the townsfolk suffer so  
 From vermin, was a pity.

### II.

Rats !

They fought the dogs, and killed the cats,  
 And bit the babies in the cradles,  
 And ate the cheeses out of the vats,  
 And licked the soup from the cook's own ladles,  
 Split open the kegs of salted sprats,  
 Made nests inside men's Sunday hats,

## THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN. 47

And even spoiled the women's chats,  
By drowning their speaking  
With shrieking and squeaking  
In fifty different sharps and flats.

### III.

At last the people in a body  
To the Town Hall came flocking :  
" 'Tis clear," cried they, " our Mayor's a noddie  
" And as for our Corporation—shocking  
" To think we buy gowns lined with ermine  
" For dolts that can't or won't determine  
" What's best to rid us of our vermin !  
" You hope, because you're old and obese,  
" To find in the furry civic robe ease ?  
" Rouse up, Sirs ! Give your brains a racking  
" To find the remedy we're lacking,  
" Or, sure as fate, we'll send you packing ! "  
At this the Mayor and Corporation  
Quaked with a mighty consternation.

### IV.

An hour they sate in council,  
At length the Mayor broke silence :  
" For a guilder I'd my ermine gown sell ;  
" I wish I were a mile hence !  
" It's easy to bid one rack one's brain—  
" I'm sure my poor head aches again  
" I've scratched it so, and all in vain.  
" Oh for a trap, a trap, a trap ! "  
Just as he said this, what should hap  
At the chamber door but a gentle tap ?  
" Bless us," cried the Mayor, " what's that ? "  
(With the Corporation as he sat,  
Looking little though wondrous fat ;

Nor brighter was his eye, nor moister  
 Than a too-long-opened oyster,  
 Save when at noon his paunch grew mutinous  
 For a plate of turtle green and glutinous)  
 "Only a scraping of shoes on the mat?  
 "Anything like the sound of a rat  
 "Makes my heart go pit-a-pat!"

## V.

"Come in!"—the Mayor cried, looking bigger :  
 And in did come the strangest figure !  
 His queer long coat from heel to head  
 Was half of yellow and half of red ;  
 And he himself was tall and thin,  
 With sharp blue eyes, each like a pin,  
 And light loose hair, yet swarthy skin,  
 No tuft on cheek nor beard on chin,  
 But lips where smiles went out and in—  
 There was no guessing his kith and kin !  
 And nobody could enough admire  
 The tall man and his quaint attire :  
 Quoth one : "It's as my great-grandsire,  
 "Starting up at the Trump of Doom's tone,  
 "Had walked this way from his painted tomb-  
 stone!"

## VI.

He advanced to the council-table :  
 And, "Please your honours," said he, "I'm able,  
 "By means of a secret charm, to draw  
 "All creatures living beneath the sun,  
 "That creep, or swim, or fly, or run,  
 "After me so as you never saw !  
 "And I chiefly use my charm  
 "On creatures that do people harm,

## THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN. 49

"The mole, and toad, and newt, and viper ;  
"And people call me the Pied Piper."  
(And here they noticed round his neck  
A scarf of red and yellow stripe,  
To match with his coat of the self-same cheque ;  
And at the scarf's end hung a pipe ;  
And his fingers, they noticed, were ever straying  
As if impatient to be playing  
Upon this pipe, as low it dangled  
Over his vesture so old-fangled.)  
"Yet," said he, "poor piper as I am,  
"In Tartary I freed the Cham,  
"Last June, from his huge swarms of gnats ;  
"I eased in Asia the Nizam  
"Of a monstrous brood of vampyre-bats :  
"And, as for what your brain bewilders,  
"If I can rid your town of rats  
"Will you give me a thousand guilders ?"  
"One ? fifty thousand !"—was the exclamation  
Of the astonished Mayor and Corporation.

### VII.

Into the street the Piper stopt,  
Smiling first a little smile,  
As if he knew what magic slept  
In his quiet pipe the while ;  
Then, like a musical adept,  
To blow the pipe his lips he wrinkled,  
And green and blue his sharp eyes twinkled  
Like a candle flame where salt is sprinkled ;  
And ere three shrill notes the pipe uttered,  
You heard as if an army muttered ;  
And the muttering grew to a grumbling ;  
And the grumbling grew to a mighty rumbling ;

### III.

### D

And out of the houses the rats came tumbling.  
 Great rats, small rats, lean rats, brawny rats,  
 Brown rats, black rats, grey rats, tawny rats,  
 Gray old plodders, gay young friskers,  
     Fathers, mothers, uncles, cousins,  
 Cocking tails and pricking whiskers,  
     Families by tens and dozens,  
 Brothers, sisters, husbands, wives—  
 Followed the Piper for their lives.  
 From street to street he piped advancing,  
 And step for step they followed dancing,  
 Until they came to the river Weser  
 Wherein all plunged and perished  
 —Save one who, stout as Julius Cæsar,  
 Swam across and lived to carry  
 (As he the manuscript he cherished)  
 To Rat-land home his commentary,  
 Which was, "At the first shrill notes of the pipe,  
 "I heard a sound as of scraping tripe,  
 "And putting apples, wondrous ripe,  
 "Into a cider-press's gripe :  
 "And a moving away of pickle-tub-boards,  
 "And a leaving ajar of conserve-cupboards,  
 "And a drawing the corks of train-oil-flasks,  
 "And a breaking the hoops of butter-casks ;  
 "And it seemed as, if a voice  
 "(Sweeter far than by harp or by psaltery  
 "Is breathed) called out, Oh rats, rejoice !  
 "The world is grown to one vast drysaltery !  
 "So munch on, crunch on, take your nuncheon,  
 "Breakfast, supper, dinner, luncheon !  
 "And just as a bulky sugar-puncheon,  
 "All ready staved, like a great sun shone  
 "Glorious scarce an inch before me,  
 "Just as methought it said, Come, bore me !  
 "—I found the Weser rolling o'er me."

VIII.

You should have heard the Hamelin people  
 Ringing the bells till they rocked the steeple ;  
 "Go," cried the Mayor, "and get long poles !  
 "Poke out the nests and block up the holes !  
 "Consult with carpenters and builders,  
 "And leave in our town not even a trace  
 "Of the rats !"—when suddenly up the face  
 Of the Piper perked in the market-place,  
 With a, "First, if you please, my thousand  
 guilders !"

IX.

A thousand guilders ! The Mayor looked blue ;  
 So did the Corporation too.  
 For council dinners made rare havock  
 With Claret, Moselle, Vin-de-Grave, Hock ;  
 And half the money would replenish  
 Their cellar's biggest butt with Rhenish.  
 To pay this sum to a wandering fellow  
 With a gipsy coat of red and yellow !  
 "Beside," quoth the Mayor with a knowing wink,  
 "Our business was done at the river's brink ;  
 "We saw with our eyes the vermin sink,  
 "And what's dead can't come to life, I think.  
 "So, friend, we're not the folks to shrink  
 "From the duty of giving you something for drink,  
 "And a matter of money to put in your poke ;  
 "But, as for the guilders, what we spoke  
 "Of them, as you very well know, was in joke.  
 "Beside, our losses have made us thrifty ;  
 "A thousand guilders ! Come, take fifty !"

X.

The piper's face fell, and he cried,  
 "No trifling ! I can't wait, beside !

"I've promised to visit by dinner time  
 "Bagdat, and accept the prime  
 "Of the Head Cook's pottage, all he's rich in,  
 "For having left, in the Caliph's kitchen,  
 "Of a nest of scorpions no survivor—  
 "With him I proved no bargain-driver,  
 "With you, don't think I'll bate a stiver !  
 "And folks who put me in a passion  
 "May find me pipe to another fashion."

## XI.

"How?" cried the Mayor, "d'ye think I'll brook  
 "Being worse treated than a Cook ?  
 "Insulted by a lazy ribald  
 "With idle pipe and vesture piebald ?  
 "You threaten us, fellow? Do your worst,  
 "Blow your pipe there till you burst!"

## XII.

Once more he stepped into the street ;  
 And to his lips again  
 Laid his long pipe of smooth straight cane ;  
 And ere he blew three notes (such sweet  
 Soft notes as yet music man's cunning  
 Never gave the enraptured air)  
 There was a rustling, that seemed like a bustling  
 Of merry crowds justling at pitching and hustling,  
 Small feet were pattering, wooden shoes clattering,  
 Little hands clapping, and little tongues chattering,  
 And, like fowls in a farm-yard when barley is  
 scattering,  
 Out came the children running.  
 All the little boys and girls,  
 With rosy cheeks and flaxen curls,  
 And sparkling eyes and teeth like pearls,

## THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN. 53

Tripping and skipping, ran merrily after  
The wonderful music with shouting and laughter.

### XIII.

The Mayor was dumb, and the Council stood  
As if they were changed into blocks of wood,  
Unable to move a step, or cry  
To the children merrily skipping by—  
And could only follow with the eye  
That joyous crowd at the Piper's back.  
But how the Mayor was on the rack,  
And the wretched Council's bosoms beat,  
As the Piper turned from the High Street  
To where the Weser rolled its waters  
Right in the way of their sons and daughters !  
However he turned from South to West,  
And to Koppelberg Hill his steps addressed,  
And after him the children pressed ;  
Great was the joy in every breast.  
" He never can cross that mighty top !  
" He's forced to let the piping drop,  
" And we shall see our children stop ! "  
When, lo, as they reached the mountain's side,  
A wondrous portal opened wide,  
As if a cavern was suddenly hollowed ;  
And the Piper advanced and the children followed,  
And when all were in to the very last,  
The door in the mountain side shut fast.  
Did I say, all ? No ! One was lame,  
And could not dance the whole of the way ;  
And in after years, if you would blame  
His sadness, he was used to say,—  
" It's dull in our town since my playmates left !  
" I can't forget that I'm bereft  
" Of all the pleasant sights they see,  
" Which the Piper also promised me ;



"For he led us, he said, to a joyous land,  
 "Joining the town and just at hand,  
 "Where waters gushed and fruit-trees grew,  
 "And flowers put forth a fairer hue,  
 "And everything was strange and new;  
 "The sparrows were brighter than peacocks here,  
 "And their dogs outran our fallow deer,  
 "And honey-bees had lost their stings,  
 "And horses were born with eagles' wings;  
 "And just as I became assured  
 "My lame foot would be speedily cured,  
 "The music stopped and I stood still,  
 "And found myself outside the Hill,  
 "Left alone against my will,  
 "To go now limping as before,  
 "And never hear of that country more!"

## XIV.

Alas, alas for Hamelin!

There came into many a burgher's pate  
 A text which says, that Heaven's Gate  
 Opens to the Rich at as easy rate  
 As the needle's eye takes a camel in!  
 The Mayor sent East, West, North, and South  
 To offer the Piper by word of mouth,  
 Wherever it was men's lot to find him,  
 Silver and gold to his heart's content,  
 If he'd only return the way he went,  
 And bring the children behind him.  
 But when they saw 'twas a lost endeavour,  
 And Piper and dancers were gone for ever,  
 They made a decree that lawyers never  
 Should think their records dated duly  
 If, after the day of the month and year,  
 These words did not as well appear,  
 "And so long after what happened here

\* "On the Twenty-second of Júlý,  
 "Thirteen hundred and Seventy-six :"  
 And the better in memory to fix  
 The place of the Children's last retreat,  
 They called it, the Pied Piper's Street—  
 Where any one playing on pipe or tabor  
 Was sure for the future to lose his labour.  
 Nor suffered they Hostelry or Tavern  
 To shock with mirth a street so solemn ;  
 But opposite the place of the cavern  
 They wrote the story on a column,  
 And on the Great Church Window painted  
 The same, to make the world acquainted  
 How their children were stolen away ;  
 And there it stands to this very day.  
 And I must not omit to say  
 That in Transylvania there's a tribe  
 Of alien people that ascribe  
 The outlandish ways and dress  
 On which their neighbours lay such stress,  
 To their fathers and mothers having risen  
 Out of some subterraneous prison  
 Into which they were trepanned  
 Long time ago in a mighty band  
 Out of Hamelin town in Brunswick land,  
 But how or why, they don't understand.

ΛV.

So, Willy, let you and me be wipers  
 Of scores out with all men—especially pipers :  
 And, whether they pipe us free, from rats or from  
     mice,  
 If we've promised them aught, let us keep our  
     promise.

**"How they brought the Good News from  
Ghent to Aix."**

[16—.]

I.

I SPRANG to the stirrup, and Joris, and he;  
I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all three;  
"Good speed!" cried the watch, as the gate-bolts  
undrew;  
"Speed!" echoed the wall to us galloping through;  
Behind shut the postern, the lights sank to rest,  
And into the midnight we galloped abreast.

II.

Not a word to each other; we kept the great pace  
Neck by neck, stride by stride, never changing our place;  
I turned in my saddle and made its girths tight,  
Then shortened each stirrup, and set the pique right,  
Rebuckled the cheek-strap, chained slacker the bit,  
Nor galloped less steadily Roland a whit.

III.

'Twas moonset at starting; but while we drew near  
Lokeren, the cocks crew and twilight dawned clear;  
At Boom, a great yellow star came out to see;  
At Duffeld, 'twas morning as plain as could be;  
And from Mecheln church-steeple we heard the half-  
chime,  
So Joris broke silence with, "Yet there is time!"

IV.

At Aerschot, up leaped of a sudden the sun,  
And against him the cattle stood black every one,

## HOW THEY BROUGHT THE NEWS. 57

To stare thro' the mist at us galloping past,  
And I saw my stout galloper Roland at last,  
With resolute shoulders, each butting away  
The haze, as some bluff river headland its spray.

### V.

And his low head and crest, just one sharp ear bent back  
For my voice, and the other pricked out on his track ;  
And one eye's black intelligence,—ever that glance  
O'er its white edge at me, his own master, askance !  
And the thick heavy spume-flakes which aye and anon  
His fierce lips shook upwards in galloping on.

### VI.

By Hasselt, Dirck groaned ; and cried Joris, " Stay spur !  
" Your Roos galloped bravely, the fault's not in her,  
" We'll remember at Aix "—for one heard the quick  
wheeze  
Of her chest, saw the stretched neck and staggering  
knees,  
And sunk tail, and horrible heave of the flank,  
As down on her haunches she shuddered and sank.

### VII.

So we were left galloping, Joris and I,  
Past Looz and past Tongres, no cloud in the sky ;  
The broad sun above laughed a pitiless laugh,  
'Neath our feet broke the brittle bright stubble like chaff ;  
Till over by Dalhem a dome-spire sprang white,  
And " Gallop," gasped Joris, " for Aix is in sight ! "

" How they'll greet us ! "—and all in a moment his roan  
Rolled neck and croup over, lay dead as a stone ;

And there was my Roland to bear the whole weight  
Of the news which alone could save Aix from her fate,  
With his nostrils like pits full of blood to the brim,  
And with circles of red for his eye-sockets' rim.

## IX.

Then I cast loose my buffcoat, each holster let fall,  
Shook off both my jack-boots, let go belt and all,  
Stood up in the stirrup, leaned, patted his ear,  
Called my Roland his pet-name, my horse without peer ;  
Clapped my hands, laughed and sang, any noise, bad or  
good,  
Till at length into Aix Roland galloped and stood.

## X.

And all I remember is, friends flocking round  
As I sate with his head 'twixt my knees on the ground,  
And no voice but was praising this Roland of mine,  
As I poured down his throat our last measure of wine,  
Which (the burgesses voted by common consent)  
Was no more than his due who brought good news from  
Ghent.

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Pictor Ignotus.

[FLORENCE, 15—.]

I COULD have painted pictures like that youth's  
Ye praise so. How my soul springs up ! No bar  
Stayed me—ah, thought which saddens while it soothes !—  
Never did fate forbid me, star by star,

To outburst on your night with all my gift  
 Of fires from God : nor would my flesh have shrunk  
 From seconding my soul, with eyes uplift  
 And wide to Heaven, or, straight like thunder, sunk  
 To the centre, of an instant ; or around  
 Turned calmly and inquisitive, to scan  
 The license and the limit, space and bound,  
 Allowed to Truth made visible in Man.  
 And, like that youth ye praise so, all I saw,  
 Over the canvass could my hand have flung,  
 Each face obedient to its passion's law,  
 Each passion clear proclaimed without a tongue ;  
 Whether Hope rose at once in all the blood,  
 A-tiptoe for the blessing of embrace,  
 Or Rapture drooped the eyes, as when her brood  
 Pull down the nesting dove's heart to its place,  
 Or Confidence lit swift the forehead up,  
 And locked the mouth fast, like a castle braved,  
 O Human faces, hath it spilt, my cup ?  
 What did ye give me that I have not saved ?  
 Nor will I say I have not dreamed (how well !)  
 Of going—I, in each new picture,—forth,  
 As, making new hearts beat and bosoms swell,  
 To Pope or Kaiser, East, West, South or North,  
 Bound for the calmly satisfied great State,  
 Or glad aspiring little burgh, it went,  
 Flowers cast upon the car which bore the freight,  
 Through old streets named afresh from its event,  
 Till it reached home, where learned Age should greet  
 My face, and Youth, the star not yet distinct  
 Above his hair, lie learning at my feet !—  
 Oh, thus to live, I and my picture, linked  
 With love about, and praise, till life should end,  
 And then not go to Heaven, but linger here,  
 Here on my earth, earth's every man my friend,—  
 The thought grew frightful, 'twas so wildly dear !

But a voice changed it ! Glimpses of such sights  
Have scared me, like the revels thro' a door  
Of some strange House of Idols at its rites ;  
This world seemed not the world it was before !  
Mixed with my loving trusting ones there trooped  
. . . Who summoned those cold faces that begun  
To press on me and judge me ? Tho' I stooped  
Shrinking, as from the soldiery a nun,  
They drew me forth, and spite of me . . enough !  
These buy and sell our pictures, take and give,  
Count them for garniture and household-stuff,  
And where they live our pictures needs must live,  
And see their faces, listen to their prate,  
Partakers of their daily pettiness,  
Discussed of,—“ This I love, or this I hate,  
“ This likes me more, and this affects me less ! ”  
Wherefore I chose my portion. If at whiles  
My heart sinks, as monotonous I paint  
These endless cloisters and eternal aisles  
With the same series, Virgin, Babe, and Saint,  
With the same cold, calm, beautiful regard,  
At least no merchant traffics in my heart ;  
The sanctuary's gloom at least shall ward  
Vain tongues from where my pictures stand apart ;  
Only prayer breaks the silence of the shrine  
While, blackening in the daily candle-smoke,  
They moulder on the damp wall's travertine,  
'Mid echoes the light footstep never woke.  
So die, my pictures ; surely, gently die !  
Oh, youth, men praise so,—holds their praise its worth ?  
Blown harshly, keeps the trump its golden cry ?  
Tastes sweet the water with such specks of earth ?

## The Italian in England.

THAT second time they hunted me  
 From hill to plain, from shore to sea,  
 And Austria, hounding far and wide  
 Her blood-hounds thro' the country-side,  
 Breathed hot and instant on my trace,—  
 I made six days a hiding-place  
 Of that dry green old aqueduct  
 Where I and Charles, when boys, have plucked  
 The fire-flies from the root above,  
 Bright creeping thro' the moss they love.  
 —How long it seems since Charles was lost !  
 Six days the soldiers crossed and crossed  
 The country in my very sight ;  
 And when that peril ceased at night,  
 The sky broke out in red dismay  
 With signal-fires ; well, there I lay  
 Close covered o'er in my recess,  
 Up to the neck in ferns and cress,  
 Thinking on Metternich our friend,  
 And Charles's miserable end,  
 And much beside, two days ; the third,  
 Hunger o'ercame me when I heard  
 The peasants from the village go  
 To work among the maize ; you know,  
 With us, in Lombardy, they bring  
 Provisions packed on mules, a string  
 With little bells that cheer their task,  
 And casks, and boughs on every cask  
 To keep the sun's heat from the wine ;  
 These I let pass in jingling line,  
 And, close on them, dear noisy crew,  
 The peasants from the village, too ;



For at the very rear would troop  
Their wives and sisters in a group  
To help, I knew ; when these had passed,  
I threw my glove to strike the last,  
Taking the chance : she did not start,  
Much less cry out, but stooped apart  
One instant, rapidly glanced round,  
And saw me beckon from the ground :  
A wild bush grows and hides my crypt ;  
She picked my glove up while she stripped  
A branch off, then rejoined the rest  
With that ; my glove lay in her breast :  
Then I drew breath : they disappeared :  
It was for Italy I feared.

An hour, and she returned alone  
Exactly where my glove was thrown.  
Meanwhile came many thoughts ; on me  
Rested the hopes of Italy ;  
I had devised a certain tale  
Which, when 'twas told her, could not fail  
Persuade a peasant of its truth ;  
I meant to call a freak of youth  
This hiding, and give hopes of pay,  
And no temptation to betray.  
But when I saw that woman's face,  
Its calm simplicity of grace,  
Our Italy's own attitude  
In which she walked thus far, and stood,  
Planting each naked foot so firm,  
To crush the snake and spare the worm—  
At first sight of her eyes, I said,  
“ I am that man upon whose head  
“ They fix the price, because I hate  
“ The Austrians over us : the State  
“ Will give you gold—oh, gold so much,

"If you betray me to their clutch !  
"And be your death, for aught I know,  
"If once they find you saved their foe.  
"Now, you must bring me food and drink,  
"And also paper, pen, and ink,  
"And carry safe what I shall write  
"To Padua, which you'll reach at night  
"Before the Duomo shuts ; go in,  
"And wait till Tenebræ begin ;  
"Walk to the Third Confessional,  
"Between the pillar and the wall,  
"And kneeling whisper *whence comes peace ?*  
"Say it a second time ; then cease ;  
"And if the voice inside returns,  
"*From Christ and Freedom ; what concerns*  
"*The cause of l'euic ?*—for answer, slip  
"My letter where you placed your lip ;  
"Then come back happy we have done  
"Our mother service—I, the son,  
"As you the daughter of our land !"

Three mornings more, she took her stand  
In the same place, with the same eyes :  
I was no surer of sun-rise  
Than of her coming : we conferred  
Of her own prospects, and I heard  
She had a lover—stout and tall,  
She said—then let her eyelids fall,  
"He could do much"—as if some doubt  
Entered her heart,—then, passing out,  
"She could not speak for others—who  
"Had other thoughts ; herself she knew :"  
And so she brought me drink and food.  
After four days, the scouts pursued  
Another path : at last arrived  
The help my Paduan friends contrived

To furnish me : she brought the news :  
 For the first time I could not choose  
 But kiss her hand and lay my own  
 Upon her head—"This faith was shown  
 "To Italy, our mother ;—she  
 "Uses my hand and blesses thee !"  
 She followed down to the sea-shore ;  
 I left and never saw her more.

How very long since I have thought  
 Concerning—much less wished for—ought  
 Beside the good of Italy  
 For which I live and mean to die !  
 I never was in love ; and since  
 Charles proved false, nothing could convince  
 My inmost heart I had a friend ;  
 However, if I pleased to spend  
 Real wishes on myself—say, Three—  
 I know at least what one should be ;  
 I would grasp Metternich until  
 I felt his red wet throat distil  
 In blood thro' these two hands : and next,  
 —Nor much for that am I perplexed—  
 Charles, perjured traitor, for his part,  
 Should die slow of a broken heart  
 Under his new employers : last  
 —Ah, there, what should I wish ? For fast  
 Do I grow old and out of strength.—  
 If I resolved to seek at length  
 My father's house again, how scared  
 They all would look, and unprepared !  
 My brothers live in Austria's pay  
 —Disowned me long ago, men say ;  
 And all my early mates who used  
 To praise me so—perhaps induced  
 More than one early step of mine—

Are turning wise ; while some opine  
 "Freedom grows License," some suspect  
 "Haste breeds Delay," and recollect  
 They always said, such preinature  
 Beginnings never could endure !  
 So, with a sullen "All's for best,"  
 The land seems settling to its rest.  
 I think, then, I should wish to stand  
 This evening in that dear, lost land,  
 Over the sea the thousand miles,  
 And know if yet that woman smiles  
 With the calm smile ; some little fair  
 She lives in there, no doubt ; what harm  
 If I sate on the door-side bench,  
 And, while her spindle made a trench  
 Fantastically in the dust,  
 Inquired of all her fortunes—just  
 Her children's ages and their names,  
 And what may be the husband's aims  
 For each of them—I'd talk this out,  
 And sit there, for an hour about,  
 Then kiss her hand once more, and lay  
 Mine on her head, and go my way.

So much for idle wishing—how  
 It steals the time ! To business now !

### The Englishman in Italy.

[PIANO DI SORRENTO.]

FORTÙ, Fortù, my beloved one,  
 Sit here by my side,  
 On my knees put up both little feet !  
 I was sure, if I tried,

I could make you laugh spite of Scirocco :  
 Now, open your eyes—  
 Let me keep you amused till he vanish  
 In black from the skies,  
 With telling my memories over  
 As you tell your heads ;  
 All the memories plucked at Sorrento  
 —The flowers, or the weeds.

Time for rain ! for your long hot dry Autumn  
 Had net-worked with brown  
 The white skin of each grape on the bunches,  
 Marked like a quail's crown,  
 Those creatures you make such account of,  
 Whose heads,—specked with white  
 Over brown like a great spider's back,  
 As I told you last night,—  
 Your mother bites off for her supper ;  
 Red-ripe as could be,  
 Pomegranates were chapping and splitting  
 In halves on the tree :  
 And betwixt the loose walls of great flintstone,  
 Or in the thick dust  
 On the path, or straight out of the rock side  
 Wherever could thrust  
 Some burnt sprig of bold hardy rock-flower  
 Its yellow face up,  
 For the prize were great butterflies fighting,  
 Some five for one cup.  
 So, I guessed, ere I got up this morning,  
 What change was in store,  
 By the quick rustle-down of the quail-nets  
 Which woke me before  
 I could open my shutter, made fast  
 With a bough and a stone,  
 And look thro' the twisted dead vine-twigs,

Sole lattice that's known !  
 Quick and sharp rang the rings down the net-poles,  
 While, busy beneath,  
 Your priest and his brother tugged at them,  
 The rain in their teeth :  
 And out upon all the flat house-roofs  
 Where split figs lay dying,  
 The girls took the frails under cover :  
 Nor use seemed in trying  
 To get out the boats and go fishing,  
 For, under the cliff,  
 Fierce the black water frothed o'er the blind-rock.  
 No seeing our skiff  
 Arrive about noon from Amalfi,  
 —Our fisher arrive,  
 And pitch down his basket before us,  
 All trembling alive  
 With pink and grey jellies, your sea-fruit,  
 —You touch the strange lumps,  
 And mouths gape there, eyes open, all manner  
 Of horns and of humps,  
 Which only the fisher looks grave at,  
 While round him like unps,  
 Cling screaming the children as naked  
 And brown as his shrimps ;  
 Himself too as bare to the middle—  
 —You see round his neck  
 The string and its brass coin suspended,  
 That saves him from wreck.  
 But to-day not a boat reached Salerno,  
 So back to a man  
 Came our friends, with whose help in the vineyards  
 Grape-harvest began :  
 In the vat, half-way up in our house-side,  
 Like blood the juice spins,  
 While your brother all bare-legged is dancing

Till breathless he grins  
 Dead-beaten, in effort on effort  
 To keep the grapes under,  
 Since still when he seems all but master,  
 In pours the fresh plunder  
 From girls who keep coming and going  
 With basket on shoulder,  
 And eyes shut against the rain's driving,  
 Your girls that are older,—  
 For under the hedges of aloe,  
 And where, on its bed  
 Of the orchard's black mould, the love-apple  
 Lies pulpy and red,  
 All the young ones are kneeling and filling  
 Their laps with the snails  
 Tempted out by this first rainy weather,—  
 Your best of regales,  
 As to-night will be proved to my sorrow,  
 When, supping in state,  
 We shall feast our grape-gleaners (two dozen,  
 Three over one plate)  
 With lasagne so tempting to swallow  
 In slippery ropes,  
 And gourds fried in great purple slices,  
 That colour of popes.  
 Meantime, see the grape-bunch they've brought  
 you,—  
 The rain-water slips  
 O'er the heavy blue bloom on each globe  
 Which the wasp to your lips  
 Still follows with fretful persistence—  
 Nay, taste, while awake,  
 This half of a curd-white smooth cheese-ball,  
 That peels, flake by flake,  
 Like an onion's, each smoother and whiter  
 Next, sip this weak wine

## THE ENGLISHMAN IN ITALY. 69

From the thin green glass flask, with its stopper,  
A leaf of the vine,—  
And end with the prickly-pear's red flesh  
That leaves thro' its juice  
The stony black seeds on your pearl-teeth  
. . . Scirocco is loose !  
Hark ! the quick, whistling pelt of the olives  
Which, thick in one's track,  
Tempt the stranger to pick up and bite them,  
Tho' not yet half black !  
How the old twisted olive trunks shudder !  
The medlars let fall  
Their hard fruit, and the brittle great fig-trees  
Snap off, figs and all,—  
For here comes the whole of the tempest !  
No refuge, but creep  
Back again to my side and my shoulder,  
And listen or sleep.

O how will your country show next week,  
When all the vine-boughs  
I have been stripped of their foliage to pasture  
The mules and the cows ?  
Last eve, I rode over the mountains ;  
Your brother, my guide,  
Soon left me, to feast on the myrtles  
That offered, each side,  
Their fruit-balls, black, glossy and luscious,—  
Or strip from the sorbs  
A treasure, so rosy and wondrous,  
Of hairy gold orbs !  
But my mule picked his sure, sober path out,  
Just stopping to neigh  
When he recognised down in the valley  
His mates on their way



With the faggots, and barrels of water ;  
And soon we emerged  
From the plain, where the woods could scarce  
follow ;  
And still as we urged  
Our way, the woods wondered, and left us,  
As up still we trudged  
Though the wild path grew wilder each instant,  
And place was e'en grudged  
'Mid the rock-chasms, and piles of loose stones  
(Like the loose broken teeth  
Of some monster, which climbed there to die  
From the ocean beneath)  
Place was grudged to the silver-grey fume-weed  
That clung to the path,  
And dark rosemary, ever a-dying,  
That, 'spite the wind's wrath,  
So loves the salt rock's face to seaward,—  
And lentisks as staunch  
To the stone where they root and bear berries,—  
And . . . what shows a branch  
Coral-coloured, transparent, with circlets  
Of pale seagreen leaves—  
Over all trod my mule with the caution  
Of gleaners o'er sheaves,  
Still, foot after foot like a lady—  
So, round after round,  
He climbed to the top of Calvano,  
And God's own profound  
Was above me, and round me the mountains,  
And under, the sea,  
And within me, my heart to bear witness  
What was and shall be !  
Oh heaven, and the terrible crystal !  
No rampart excludes  
Your eye from the life to be lived

## THE ENGLISHMAN IN ITALY. 71

In the blue solitudes !  
Oh, those mountains, their infinite movement !  
Still moving with you—  
For, ever some new head and breast of them  
Thrusts into view  
To observe the intruder—you see it  
If quickly you turn  
And, before they escape you, surprise them—  
They grudge you should learn  
How the soft plains they look on, lean over,  
And love (they pretend)  
—Cower beneath them ; the flat sea-pine crouches,  
The wild fruit-trees bend,  
E'en the myrtle-leaves curl, shrink and shut—  
All is silent and grave—  
'Tis a sensual and timorous beauty—  
How fair, but a slave !  
So, I turned to the sea,—and there slumbered  
As greenly as ever  
Those isles of the siren, you Galli ;  
No ages can sever  
The Three, nor enable their sister  
To join them,—half way  
On the voyage, she looked at Ulysses—  
No farther to-day ;  
Tho' the small one, just launched in the wave,  
Watches' breast-high and steady  
From under the rock, her bold sister  
Swum half-way already.  
Fortù, shall we sail there together  
And see from the sides  
Quite new rocks show their faces—new haunts  
Where the siren abides ?  
Shall we sail round and round them, close over  
The rocks, tho' unseen,  
That ruffle the gray glassy water.

To glorious green ?  
 Then scramble from splinter to splinter,  
 Reach land and explore,  
 On the lar est, the strange square black turret  
 With never a door,  
 Just a loop to admit the quick lizards ;  
 Then, stand there and hear  
 The birds' quiet singing, that tells us  
 What life is, so clear !  
 The secret they sang to Ulysses,  
 When, ages ago,  
 He heard and he knew this life's secret,  
 I hear and I know !

Ah, see ! The sun breaks o'er Calvano—  
 He strikes the great gloom  
 And flutters it o'er the mount's summit  
 In airy gold fume !  
 All is over ! Look out, see the gypsy,  
 Our tinkler and smith,  
 Has arrived, set up bellows and forge,  
 And down-squatted forthwith  
 To his hammering, under the wall there ,  
 One eye keeps aloof  
 The urchins that itch to be putting  
 His jews'-harps to proof,  
 While the other, thro' locks of curled wire,  
 Is watching how sleek  
 Shines the hog, come to share in the windfalls  
 —An abbot's own cheek !  
 All is over ! Wake up and come out now,  
 And down let us go,  
 And see the fine things got in order  
 At Church for the show  
 Of the Sacrament, set forth this evening ;

To-morrow's the Feast  
 Of the Rosary's Virgin, by no means  
 Of Virgins the least -  
 As you'll hear in the off-hand discourse  
 Which (all nature, no art)  
 The Dominican brother, these three weeks,  
 Was getting by heart.  
 Not a post nor a pillar but's dizen'd  
 With red and blue papers;  
 All the roof waves with ribbons, each altar  
 A-blaze with long tapers;  
 But the great masterpiece is the scaffold  
 Rigged glorious to hold  
 All the fiddlers and fisks and drummers,  
 And trumpeters bold,  
 Not afraid of Bellini nor Auber,  
 Who, when the priest's hoarse,  
 Will strike us up something that's brisk  
 For the feast's second course.  
 And then will the flaxen-wigged Image  
 Be carried in pomp  
 Thro' the plain, while in gallant procession  
 The priests mean to stomp.  
 And all round the glad church lie old bottles  
 With gunpowder stopped,  
 Which will be, when the Image re-enters,  
 Religiously popped.  
 And at night from the crest of Calvano  
 Great bonfires will hang,  
 On the plain will the trumpets join chorus,  
 And more poppers bang!  
 At all events, come—to the garden,  
 As far as the wall,  
 See me tap with a hoe on the plaster  
 Till out there shall fall  
 A scorpion with wide angry nippers!

. . . "Such trifles"—you say?  
 Fortù, in my England at home,  
 Men meet gravely to-day  
 And debate, if abolishing Corn-laws  
 Is righteous and wise  
 —If 'tis proper, Scirocco should vanish  
 In black from the skies!

---

### The Lost Leader.

#### I.

JUST for a handful of silver he left us,  
 Just for a riband to stick in his coat—  
 Found the one gift of which fortune bereft us,  
 Lost all the others she lets us devote;  
 They, with the gold to give, doled him out silver,  
 So much was their's who so little allowed:  
 How all our copper had gone for his service!  
 Rags—were they purple, his heart had been proud!  
 We that had loved him so, followed him, honoured him,  
 Lived in his mild and magnificent eye,  
 Learned his great language, caught his clear accents,  
 Made him our pattern to live and to die!  
 Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for us,  
 Burns, Shelley, were with us,—they watch from their  
 graves!  
 He alone breaks from the van and the freemen,  
 He alone sinks to the rear and the slaves!

We shall march prospering,—not thro' his presence;  
 Songs may inspirit us,—not from his lyre;

Deeds will be done,—while he boasts his quiescence,  
Still bidding crouch whom the rest bade aspire :  
Blot out his name, then,—record one lost soul more,  
One task more declined, one more footpath untrod,  
One more triumph for devils, and sorrow for angels,  
One wrong more to man, one more insult to God !  
Life's night begins : let him never come back to us !  
There would be doubt, hesitation and pain,  
Forced praise on our part—the glimmer of twilight,  
Never glad confident morning again !  
Best fight on well, for we taught him,—strike gallantly,  
Aim at our heart ere we pierce through his own ;  
Then let him receive the new knowledge and wait us,  
Pardoned in Heaven, the first by the throne !

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### The Lost Mistress.

#### I.

ALL's over, then—does truth sound bitter  
As one at first believes ?  
Hark, 'tis the sparrow's good-night twitter  
About your cottage eaves !

#### II.

And the leaf-buds on the vine are woolly,  
I noticed that, to-day ;  
One day more bursts them open fully  
—You know the red turnus gray.

## III.

To-morrow we meet the same then, dearest?  
 May I take your hand in mine?  
 Mere friends are we,—well, friends the merest  
 Keep much that I'll resign:

## IV.

For each glance of that eye so bright and black,  
 Though I keep with heart's endeavour,—  
 Your voice, when you wish the snowdrops back,  
 Though it stays in my soul for ever!—

## V.

—Yet I will but say what mere friends say,  
 Or only a thought stronger;  
 I will hold your hand but as long as all may,  
 Or so very little longer!

Some Thoughts, from Abroad.

## I.

OH, to be in England  
 Now that April's there,  
 And whoever wakes in England  
 Sees, some morning, unaware,  
 That the lowest boughs and the brush-wood sheaf  
 Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,  
 While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough  
 In England—now!

## HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM ABROAD. 77

### II.

And after April, when May follows, \*  
And the whitethroat builds, and all the swallows—  
Hark ! where my blossomed pear-tree in the hedge  
Leans to the field and scatters on the clover  
Blossoms and dewdrops—at the bent spray's edge—  
That's the wise thrush ; he sings each song twice over,  
Lest you should think he never could recapture  
The first fine careless rapture !  
And though the fields look rough with hoary dew,  
All will be gay when noontide wakes anew  
The buttercups, the little children's dower,  
—Far brighter than this gaudy melon-flower !

### III.

Here's to Nelson's memory !  
'Tis the second time that I, at sea,  
Right off Cape Trafalgar here,  
Have drunk it deep in British beer :  
Nelson for ever—any time  
Am I his to command in prose or rhyme !  
Give me of Nelson only a touch,  
And I guard it, be it little or much ;  
Here's one the Captain gives, and so  
Down at the word, by George, shall it go !  
He says that at Greenwich they show the beholder  
Nelson's coat, " still with tar on the shoulder,  
" For he used to lean with one shoulder digging,  
" Jigging, as it were, and zig-zag-zigging,  
" Up against the mizen rigging ! "



### Home-Thoughts, from the Sea.

NOBLY, nobly Can : Saint Vincent to the north-west died  
     away ;  
 Sunset ran, one glorious blood-red, reeking into Cadiz  
     Bay ;  
 Bluish mid the burning water, full in face Trafalgar lay ;  
 In the dimmest north-east distance, dawned Gibraltar  
     grand and gray ;  
 " Here and here did England help me,—how can I help  
     England ? "—say,  
 Whoso turns as I, this evening, turn to God to praise  
     and pray,  
 While Jove's planet rises yonder, silent over Africa.

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### The Bishop orders his Tomb at St. Praxed's Church.

[ROME, 15—.]

VANITY, saith the preacher, vanity !  
 Draw round my bed : is Anselm keeping back ?  
 Nephews—sons mine . . . ah God, I know not !  
     Well—  
 She, men would have to be your mother once,  
 Old Gandolf envied me, so fair she was !  
 What's done is done, and she is dead beside,  
 Dead long ago, and I am Bishop since,  
 And as she died so must we die ourselves,  
 And thence ye may perceive the world's a dream.

Life, how and what is it? As here I lie  
In this state-chamber, dying by degrees,  
Hours and long hours in the dead night, I ask  
“Do I live, am I dead?” Peace, peace seems all.  
St. Praxed’s ever was the church for peace;  
And so, about this tomb of mine. I fought  
With tooth and nail to save my niche, ye know :  
—Old Gandolf cozened me, despite my care ;  
Shrewd was that snatch from out the corner South  
He graced his carrion with, God curse the same !  
Yet still my niche is not so cramped but thence  
One sees the pulpit o’ the epistle-side,  
And somewhat of the choir, those silent seats,  
And up into the aery dome where live  
The angels, and a sunbeam’s sure to lurk :  
And I shall fill my slab of basalt there,  
And ’neath my tabernacle take my rest,  
With those nine columns round me, two and two,  
The odd one at my feet where Anselm stands :  
Peach-blossom marble all, the rare, the ripe  
As fresh-poured red wine of a mighty pulse  
—Old Gandolf with his paltry onion-stone,  
Put me where I may look at him ! True peach,  
Rosy and flawless : how I earned the prize !  
Draw close : that conflagration of my church  
—What then? So much was saved if aught were  
missed !

My sons, ye would not be my death? Go dig  
The white-grape vineyard where the oil-press stood,  
Drop water gently till the surface sinks,  
And if ye find . . . Ah, God I know not, I ! . . .  
Bedded in store of rotten figleaves soft,  
And corded up in a tight olive-frail,  
Some lump, ah God, of *lapis lazuli*,  
Big as a Jew’s head cut off at the nape,  
Blue as a vein o’er the Madonna’s breast . . .

Sons, all have I bequeathed you, villas, all,  
That brave Frascati villa with its bath,  
So, let the blue lily poise between my knees,  
Like God the Father's globe on both his hands  
Ye worship in the Jesu Church so gay,  
For Gandolf shall not choose but see and burst !  
Swift as a weaver's shuttle fleet our years :  
Man goeth to the grave, and where is he ?  
Did I say basalt for my slab, sons ? Black--  
'Twas ever antique-black I meant ! How else  
Shall ye contrast my frieze to come beneath ?  
The bas-relief in bronze ye promised me,  
Those Pans and Nymphs ye wot of, and perchance  
Some tripod, thyrsus, with a vase or so,  
The Saviour at his sermon on the mount,  
St. Praxed in a glory, and one Pan  
Ready to twitch the Nymph's last garment off,  
And Moses with the tables . . . but I know  
Ye mark me not ! What do they whisper thee,  
Child of my bowels, Anselm ? Ah, ye hope  
To revel down my villas while I gasp  
Bricked o'er with beggar's mouldy travertine  
Which Gandolf from his tomb-top chuckles at !  
Nay, boys, ye love me—all of jasper, then !  
'Tis jasper ye stand pledged to, lest I grieve  
My bath must needs be left behind, alas !  
One block, pure green as a pistachio-nut,  
There's plenty jasper somewhere in the world—  
And have I not St. Praxed's ear to pray  
Horses for ye, and brown Greek manuscripts,  
And mistresses with great smooth marble limbs ?  
—That's if ye carve my epitaph aright,  
Choice Latin, picked phrase, Tully's every word,  
No gaudy ware like Gandolf's second line—  
Tully, my masters ? Ulpian serves his need !  
And then how I shall lie through centuries,

And hear the blessed mutter of the mass,  
 And see God made and eaten all day long,  
 And feel the steady candle-flame, and taste  
 Good strong thick stupifying incense-smoke !  
 For as I lie here, hours of the dead night,  
 Dying in state and by such slow degrees,  
 I fold my arms as if they clasped a crook,  
 And stretch my feet forth straight as stone can point,  
 And let the bedclothes for a mortcloth drop  
 Into great laps and folds of sculptor's-work :  
 And as you tapers dwindle, and strange thoughts  
 Grow, with a certain humming in my ears,  
 About the life before I lived this life,  
 And this life too, Popes, Cardinals and Priests,  
 St. Praxed at his sermon on the mount,  
 Your tall pale mother with her talking eyes,  
 And new-found agate urns as fresh as day,  
 And marble's language, Latin pure, discreet,  
 —Aha, ELUCESCENT quoth our friend ?  
 No Tully, said I, Ulpian at the best !  
 Evil and brief hath been my pilgrimage.  
 All *lapis*, all, sons ! Else I gave the Pope  
 My villas : will ye ever eat my heart ?  
 Ever your eyes were as a lizard's quick,  
 They glitter like your mother's for my soul,  
 Or ye would heighten my impoverished frieze,  
 Piece out its starved design, and fill my vase  
 With grapes, and add a vizor and a Term,  
 And to the tripod ye would tie a lynx  
 That in his struggle throws the thyrsus down,  
 To comfort me on my entablature  
 Whereon I am to lie till I must ask  
 "Do I live, am I dead ?" There, leave me, there !  
 For ye have stabbed me with ingratitude  
 To death—ye wish it—God, ye wish it ! Stone—  
 Gritstone, a-crumble ! Clammy squares which sweat

As if the corpse they keep were oozing through—  
 And no more *lapis* to delight the world !  
 Well, go ! I bless ye. Fewer tapers there,  
 But in a row : sad, going, turn your backs  
 —Ay, like departing altar-ministrants,  
 And leave me in my church, the church for peace,  
 That I may watch at leisure if he leers—  
 Old Gandolf, at me, from his onion-stone,  
 As still he envied me, so fair she was !

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### Garden=Fancies.

#### I.—THE FLOWER'S NAME.

##### I.

HERE's the garden she walked across,  
 Arm in my arm, such a short while since :  
 Hark, now I push its wicket, the moss  
 Hinders the hinges and makes them wince !  
 She must have reached this shrub ere she turned,  
 As back with that murmur the wicket swung ;  
 For she laid the poor snail, 'ry chance foot spurned  
 To feed and forget it the leaves among.

##### II.

Down this side of the gravel-walk  
 She went while her robe's edge brushed the box :  
 And here she paused in her gracious talk  
 To point me a moth on the milk-white flox.  
 Roses, ranged in valiant row,  
 I will never think that she passed you by !  
 She loves you noble roses, I know ;  
 But yonder, see, where the rock-plants lie !

This flower she stopped at, finger on lip,  
    Stooped over, in doubt, as settling its claim ;  
Till she gave me, with pride to make no slip,  
    Its soft meandering Spanish name.  
What a name ! was it love, or praise ?  
    Speech half-asleep, or song half-awake ?  
I must learn Spanish, one of these days,  
    Only for that slow sweet name's sake.

## IV.

Roses, if I live and do well,  
    I may bring her, one of these days,  
To fix you fast with as fine a spell,  
    Fit you each with his Spanish phrase !  
But do not detain me now ; for she lingers  
    There, like sunshine over the ground,  
And ever I see her soft white fingers  
    Searching after the bud she found.

Flower, you Spaniard, look that you grow not,  
    Stay as you are and be loved for ever !  
Bud, if I kiss you 'tis that you blow not,  
    Mind, the shut pink mouth opens never !  
For while thus it pouts, her fingers wrestle,  
    Twinkling the audacious leaves between,  
Till round they turn and down they nestle—  
    Is not the dear mark still to be seen ?

## VI.

Where I find her not, beauties vanish ;  
    Whither I follow her, beauties flee ;  
Is there no method to tell her in Spanish  
    June's twice June since she breathed it with me ?

Come, bud, show me the least of her traces,  
 Treasure my lady's lightest foot-fall  
 —Ah, you may flout and turn up your faces—  
 Roses, you are not so fair after all !

# II.—SIBRANDUS SCHAFNABURGENSIS.

## I.

Plague take all your pedants, say I !  
 He who wrote what I hold in my hand,  
 Centuries back was so good as to die,  
 Leaving this rubbish to cumber the land ;  
 This, that was a book in its time,  
 Printed on paper and bound in leather,  
 Last month in the white of a matin-prime  
 Just when the birds sang all together.

## II.

Into the garden I brought it to read,  
 And under the arbut and laurustine  
 Read it, so help me grace in my need,  
 From title-page to closing line.  
 Chapter on chapter did I count,  
 As a curious traveller counts Stonehenge ;  
 Added up the mortal amoun' ;  
 And then proceeded to my revenge.

## III.

Yonder's a plum-tree, with a crevice  
 An owl would build in, were he but sage ;  
 For a lap of moss, like a fine pont-levis  
 In a castle of the middle age,  
 Joins to a lip of gum, pure amber ;  
 When he'd be private, there might he spend  
 Hours alone in his lady's chamber :  
 Into this crevice I dropped our friend.

## IV.

Splash, went he, as under he ducked,  
—I knew at the bottom rain drippings stagnate ;  
Next a handful of blossoms I plucked  
To bury him with, my bookshelf's magnate ;  
Then I went in-doors, brought out a loaf,  
Half a cheese, and a bottle of Chablis ;  
Lay on the grass and forgot the oaf  
Over a jolly chapter of Rabelais.

## V.

Now, this morning, betwixt the moss  
And gum that locked our friend in limbo,  
A spider had spun his web across,  
And sate in the midst with arms a-kimbo :  
So, I took pity, for learning's sake,  
And, *de proximitis, accentibus letis*,  
*Cantate!* quoth I, as I got a rake,  
And up I fished his delectable treatise.

## VI.

Here you have it, dry in the sun,  
With all the binding all of a blister,  
And great blue spots where the ink has run,  
And reddish streaks that wink and glister .  
O'er the page so beautifully yellow—  
Oh, well have the droppings played their tricks  
Did he guess how toadstools grow, this fellow ?  
Here's one stuck in his chapter six !

## VII.

How did he like it when the live creatures  
Tickled and toused and browsed him all over,  
And worm, slug, eel, with serious features,  
Came in, each one, for his right of trover ;



When the water-beetle with great blind deaf face  
 Made of her eggs the stately deposit,  
 And the newt borrowed just so much of the preface  
 As tiled in the top of his black wife's closet.

## VIII.

All that life, and fun, and romping,  
 All that frisking, and twisting, and coupling,  
 While slowly our poor friend's leaves were swamping,  
 And clasps were cracking, and covers suppling !  
 As if you had carried sour John Knox  
 To the play-house at Paris, Vienna, or Munich,  
 Fastened him into a front-row box,  
 And danced off the Ballet with trousers and tunic.

## IX.

Come, old martyr ! What, torment enough is it ?  
 Back to my room shall you take your sweet self !  
 Good-bye, mother-beetle ; husband-est, *sufficit* !  
 See the snug niche I have made on my shelf :  
 A.'s book shall prop you up, B.'s shall cover you,  
 Here's C. to be grave with, or D. to be gay,  
 And with E. on each side, and F. right over you,  
 Dry-rot at ease till the Judgment-day !

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## The Laboratory.

[ANCIEN RÉGIME.]

## I.

Now that I, tying thy glass mask tightly,  
 May gaze thro' these faint smokes curling whitely,  
 As thou pliest thy trade in this devil's-smithy—  
 Which is the poison to poison her, prithee ?

## II.

He is with her ; and they know that I know  
Where they are, what they do : they believe my tears  
    flow  
While they laugh, laugh at me, at me fled to the drear  
Empty church, to pray God in, for them !—I am here.

## III.

Grind away, moisten and mash up thy paste,  
Pound at thy powder,—I am not in haste !  
Better sit thus, and observe thy strange things,  
Than go where men wait me and dance at the King's.

## IV.

That in the mortar—you call it a gum ?  
Ah, the brave tree whence such gold oozings come !  
And yonder soft phial, the exquisite blue,  
Sure to taste sweetly,—is that poison too ?

## V.

Had I but all of thee, thee and thy treasures,  
What a wild crowd of invisible pleasures !  
To carry pure death in an earring, a casket,  
A signet, a fan-mount, a fillagree-basket !

## VI.

Soon, at the King's, a mere lozenge to give  
And Pauline should have just thirty minutes to live !  
But to light a pastille, and Elise, with her head,  
And her breast, and her arms, and her hands, should  
    drop dead !

## VII.

Quick—is it finished ? The colour's too grim !  
Why not soft like the phial's, enticing and dim ?  
Let it brighten her drink, let her turn it and stir,  
And try it and taste, ere she fix and prefer !

## VIII.

What a drop ! She's not little, no minion like me—  
That's why she ensnared him : this never will free  
The soul from those strong, great eyes,—say, “no !”  
To that pulse's magnificent come-and-go.

## IX.

For only last night, as they whispered, I brought  
My own eyes to bear on her so, that I thought  
Could I keep them one half minute fixed, she would fall,  
Shrivelled ; she fell not ; yet this does it all !

## X.

Not that I bid you spare her the pain !  
Let death be felt and the proof remain ;  
Brand, burn up, bite into its grace—  
He is sure to remember her dying face !

## XI.

Is it done ? Take my mask off ! Nay, be not morose,  
It kills her, and this prevents seeing it close :  
The delicate droplet, my whole fortune's see—  
If it hurts her, beside, can it ever hurt me ?

## XII.

Now, take all my jewels, gorge gold to your fill,  
You may kiss me, old man, on my mouth if you will !  
But brush this dust off me, lest horror it brings  
Ere I know it—next moment I dance at the King's !

## The Confessional.

[SPAIN ]

I.

It is a lie—their Priests, their Pope,  
Their Saints, their . . . all they fear or hope  
Are lies, and lies—there ! thro' my door  
And ceiling, there ! and walls and floor,  
There, lies, they lie, shall still be hurled,  
Till spite of them I reach the world !

II.

You think Priests just and holy men !  
Before they put me in this den,  
I was a human creature too,  
With flesh and blood like one of you,  
A girl that laughed in beauty's pride  
Like lilies in your world outside.

III.

I had a lover—shame avunt !  
This poor wretched body, grim and gaunt,  
Was kissed all over till it burned,  
By lips the truest, love e'er turned  
His heart's own tint : one night they kissed  
My soul out in a burning mist.

IV.

So, next day when the accustomed train  
Of things grew round my sense again,  
" That is a sin," I said—and slow  
With downcast eyes to church I go,  
And pass to the confession-chair,  
And tell the old mild father there.

## V.

But when I faulted Beltran's name,  
 "Hh?" quoth the father; "much I blame  
 "The sin; yet wherefore idly grieve?  
 "Desp. - not,—strenuously retrieve!  
 "Nay, - will turn this love of thine  
 "To lawful love, almost divine.

## VI.

"For he is young, and led astray,  
 "This Beltran, and he schemes, men say,  
 "To change the laws of church and state;  
 "So, thine shall be an angel's fate,  
 "Who, ere the thunder breaks, should roll  
 "Its cloud away and save his soul.

## VII.

"For, when he lies upon thy breast,  
 "Thou mayst demand and be possessed  
 "Of all his plans, and next day steal  
 "To me, and all those plans reveal,  
 "That I and every priest, to purge  
 "His soul, may fast and use the scourge."

## VIII

That father's beard was long and white.  
 With love and truth his brow seemed bright;  
 I went back, all on fire with joy,  
 And, that same evening, bade the boy,  
 Tell me, as lovers should, heart-free,  
 Something to prove his love of me.

## IX

He told me what he would not tell  
 For hope of Heaven or fear of Hell;

## THE CONFESSIONAL.

91

And I lay listening in such pride,  
And, soon as he had left my side,  
Tripped to the church by morning-light  
To save his soul in his despite.

### X.

I told the father all his schemes,  
Who were his comrades, what their dreams ;  
“And now make haste,” I said, “to pray  
“The one spot from his soul away ;  
“To-night he comes, but not the same  
“Will look !” At night he never came.

### XI.

Nor next night : on the after-morn,  
I went forth with a strength new-born :  
The church was empty ; something drew  
My steps into the street ; I knew  
It led me to the market-place—  
Where, lo,—on high—the father’s face !

### XII.

That horrible black scaffold drest—  
The stapled block . . God sink the rest !  
That head strapped back, that blinding vest,  
Those knotted hands and naked breast—  
Till near one busy hangman pressed—  
And—on the neck these arms caressed. . . .

### XIII.

No part in aught they hope or fear !  
No Heaven with them, no Hell,—and here,  
No Earth, not so much space as pens  
My body in their worst of dens  
But shall bear God and Man my cry—  
Lies—lies, again—and still, they lie !

**Earth's Immortalities.**

## FAME.

SEE, as the prettiest graves will do in time,  
 Our poet's wants the freshness of its prime;  
 Spite of the sexton's browsing horse, the sods  
 Have struggled thro' its binding osier-rods;  
 Headstone and half-sunk footstone lean awry,  
 Wanting the brick-work promised by and by;  
 How the minute grey lichens, plate o'er plate,  
 Have softened down the crisp-cut name and date!

## LOVE.

SO, the year's done with!  
*(Love me for ever!)*  
 All March begun with,  
 April's endeavour;  
 May-wreaths that bound me  
 June needs must sever!  
 Now snows fall round me,  
 Quenching June's fever—  
*(Love me for ever!)*

---

**Song.**

## I.

NAY but you, who do not love her,  
 Is she not pure gold, my mistress?  
 Holds earth aught—speak truth—above her?  
 Aught like this tress, see, and this tress,  
 And this last fairest tress of all,  
 So fair, see, ere I let it fall?

Because, you spend your lives in praising ;  
To praise, you search the wide world over ;  
So, why not witness, calmly gazing,  
If earth holds aught—speak truth—above her ?  
Above this tress, and this I touch  
But cannot praise, I love so much !

### The Boy and the Angel.

MORNING, evening, noon, and night,  
“Praise God,” sang Theocrite.

Then to his poor trade he turned,  
By which the daily meal was earned.

Hard he laboured, long and well ;  
O'er his work the boy's curls fell :

But ever, at each period,  
He stopped and sang, “Praise God ”

Then back again his curls he threw,  
And cheerful turned to work anew.

Said Blaise, the listening monk, “Well done ;  
“I doubt not thou art heard, my son :

“As well as if thy voice to-day  
“Were praising God, the Pope's great way.



"This Easter Day, the Pope at Rome  
"Praises God from Peter's dome."

Said Theocrite, "Would God that I  
"Might praise Him, that great way, and die!"

Night passed, day shone,  
And Theocrite was gone.

With God a day endures alway,  
A thousand years are but a day.

God said in Heaven, "Nor day nor night  
"Now brings the voice of my delight."

Then Gabriel, like a rainbow's birth,  
Spread his wings and sank to earth;

Entered in flesh, the empty cell,  
Lived there, and played the craftsman well:

And morning, evening, noon, and night,  
Praised God in place of Theocrite.

And from a boy, to youth he grew:  
The man put off the stripling's hue:

The man matured and fell away  
Into the season of decay:

And ever o'er the trade he bent,  
And ever lived on earth content.

(He did God's will; to him, all one  
If on the earth or in the sun.)

## THE BOY AND THE ANGEL. 95

God said, "A praise is in mine ear ;  
"There is no doubt in it, no fear :

"So sing old worlds, and so  
"New worlds that from my footstool go.

"Clearer loves sound other ways :  
"I miss my little human praise."

Then forth sprang Gabriel's wings, off fell  
The flesh disguise, remained the cell.

'Twas Easter Day : he flew to Rome,  
And paused above Saint Peter's dome.

In the tiring-room close by  
The great outer gallery,

With his holy vestments dight,  
Stood the new Pope, Theocrite :

And all his past career  
Came back upon him clear,

Since when, a boy, he plied his trade,  
Till on his life the sickness weighed ;

And in his cell, when death drew near,  
An angel in a dream brought cheer :

And rising from the sickness drear  
He grew a priest, and now stood here.

To the East with praise he turned,  
And on his sight the angel burned.

"I bore thee from thy craftsman's cell,  
 "And set thee here; I did not well.

"Vainly I left my angel's-sphere,  
 "Vain was thy dream of many a year.

"Thy voice's praise seemed weak; it dropped  
 "Creation's chorus stopped!

"Go back and praise again  
 "The early way—while I remain.

"With that weak voice of our disdain,  
 "Take up Creation's pausing strain.

"Back to the cell and poor employ:  
 "Become the craftsman and the boy!"

Theocrite grew old at home;  
 A new Pope dwelt in Peter's Dome.

One vanished as the other died:  
 They sought God side by side.

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### Meeting at Night.

#### I.

THE grey sea and the long black land;  
 And the yellow half-moon large and low;  
 And the startled little waves that leap  
 In fiery ringlets from their sleep,  
 As I gain the cove with pushing prow,  
 And quench its speed in the slushy sand.

## II.

Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach ;  
 Three fields to cross till a farm appears ;  
 A tap at the pane, the quick, sharp scratch  
 And blue spurt of a lighted match,  
 And a voice less loud, thro' its joys and tears,  
 Than the two hearts beating each to each !

— — — — —

**Parting at Morning.**

ROUND the cape of a sudden came the sea,  
 And the sun looked over the mountain's rim—  
 And straight was a path of gold for him,  
 And the need of a world of men for me.

— — — — —

**Saul.**

SAID Abner, "At last thou art come !"  
 "Ere I tell, ere thou speak,—  
 "Kiss my cheek, wish me well !" Then I wished it,  
 And did kiss his cheek :  
 And he, "Since the King, oh my friend,  
 "For thy countenance sent,  
 Nor drunken nor eaten have we ;  
 Nor, until from his tent  
 Thou return with the joyful assurance  
 The king liveth yet,  
 Shall our lip with the honey be brightened,  
 —The water, be wet.

" For out of the black mid-tent's silence,  
   A space of three days,  
 No sound hath escaped to thy servants,  
   Of prayer nor of praise,  
 To bewaken that Saul and the Spirit  
   Have ended their strife,  
 And that faint in his triumph the monarch  
   Sinks back upon life.

" Yet now my heart leaps, O beloved !  
   God's child, with his dew  
 On thy gracious gold hair, and those lilies  
   Still living and blue  
 As thou brak'st them to twine round thy harp-strings,  
   As if no wild heat  
 Were raging to torture the desert ! "

Then I, as was meet,  
 Knelt down to the God of my fathers,  
   And rose on my feet,  
 And ran o'er the sand burnt to powder.  
   The tent was unlooped ;  
 I pulled up the spear that obstructed,  
   And under I stooped ;  
 Hands and knees o'er the slippery grass-patch—  
   All withered and gone—  
 That leads to the second enclosure,  
   I groped my way on,  
 Till I felt where the fold-kirts fly open ;  
   Then once more I prayed,  
 And opened the fold-kirts and entered,  
   And was not afraid ;  
 And spoke, " Here is David, thy servant ! "

  And no voice replied ;  
 And first I saw nought but the blackness ;  
   But soon I descried  
 A something more black than the blackness

—The vast, the upright  
Main-prop which sustains the pavilion, —  
And slow into sight  
Grew a figure, gigantic, against it,  
And blackest of all ; —  
Then a sunbeam, that burst thro' the tent-roof,  
Showed Saul.  
He stood as erect as that tent-prop :  
Both arms stretched out wide  
On the great cross-support in the centre  
That goes to each side :  
So he bent not a muscle, but hung there  
As, caught in his pangs  
And waiting his change, the king-serpent  
All heavily hangs,  
Far away from his kind, in the pine,  
Till deliverance come  
With the Spring-time,—so agonized Saul,  
Drear and stark, blind and dumb.

Then I tuned my harp,—took off the lilies  
We twine round its chords  
Lest they snap 'neath the stress of the noontide  
—Those sunbeams like swords !  
And I first played the tune all our sheep know,  
As, one after one,  
So docile they come to the pen-door  
Till folding be done ;  
—They are white and untorn by the bushes,  
For lo, they have fed  
Where the long grasses stifle the water  
Within the stream's bed :  
How one after one seeks its lodging,  
As star follows star  
Into eve and the blue far above us,  
—So blue and so far !

Then the tune for which quails on the cornland  
 Will leave each his mate  
 To follow the player ; then, what makes  
 The crickets clate  
 Till for boldness they fight one another :  
 And then, what has weight  
 To set th quick jerboa a-musing  
 Outside his sand house  
 --There are none such as he for a wonder—  
 Half bird and half mouse !  
 --God made all the creatures and gave them  
 Our love and our fear,  
 To show, we and they are his children,  
 One family here.

Then I played the help-tune of our reapers,  
 Their wine-song, when hand  
 Grasps hand, eye lights eye in good friendship,  
 And great hearts expand,  
 And grow one in the sense of this world's life ;  
 And then, the low song  
 When the dead man is praised on his journey—  
 " Bear, bear him along  
 " With his few faults shut up like dead flowrets ;  
 " Are balm-seeds not here  
 " To console us ? The land is left like such  
 " As he on the bier—  
 " Oh, would we might keep thee, my brother !"  
 And then, the glad chaunt  
 Of the marriage,—first go the young maidens,  
 Next, she whom we vaunt  
 As the beauty, the pride of our dwelling :  
 And then, the great march  
 When man runs to man to assist him,  
 And buttress an arch

Nought can break . who shall harm them, our  
friends ?

Then, the chorus intoned  
As the Levites go up to the altar  
In glory enthroned—  
But I stopped here—for here, in the darkness,  
Saul groaned.

And I paused, held my breath in such silence !  
And listened apart ;  
And the tent shook, for mighty Saul shuddered,  
And sparkles 'gan dart  
From the jewels that woke in his turban  
—At once with a start  
All its lordly male-sapphires, and rubies  
Courageous at heart ;  
So the head—but the body still moved not,  
Still hung there erect.  
And I bent once again to my playing,  
Pursued it unchecked,  
As I sang, " Oh, our manhood's prime vigour !  
—No spirit feels waste,  
No muscle is stopped in its playing.  
No sinew unbraced ;—  
And the wild joys of living ! The leaping  
From rock up to rock—  
The rending their boughs from the palm-trees,—  
The cool silver shock  
Of a plunge in the pool's living water —  
The haunt of the bear,  
And the sultriness showing the lion  
Is couched in his lair :  
And the meal—the rich dates - yellowed over  
With gold dust divine,  
And the locust's-flesh steeped in the pitcher,  
The full draught of wine,



And the sleep in the dried river channel  
 Where tall rushes tell  
 The water was wont to go warbling  
 So softly and well,—  
 How good is man's life here, mere living !  
 How 't to employ  
 The heart and the soul and the senses  
 For ever in joy !  
 Hast thou loved the white locks of thy father  
 Whose sword thou didst guard  
 When he trusted thee forth to the wolf hunt  
 For glorious reward ?  
 Didst thou see the thin hands of thy mother  
 Held up, as men sung  
 The song of the nearly-departed,  
 And heard her faint tongue  
 Joining in while it could to the witness  
 " Let one more attest,  
 " I have lived, seen God's hand thro' that life-time,  
 " And all was for best . . ."  
 Then they sung thro' their tears, in strong triumph,  
 Not much,—but the rest !  
 And thy brothers—the help and the contest,  
 The working whence grew  
 Such result, as from seething grape-bundles  
 The spirit so true :  
 And the friends of thy boyhood—that boyhood  
 With wonder and hope,  
 Present promise, and wealth in the future, —  
 The eye's eagle scope, —  
 Till lo, thou art grown to a monarch,  
 A people is thine !  
 Oh all gifts the world offers singly,  
 On one head combining,  
 On one head the joy and the pride,  
 Even rage like the throe

That opes the rock, helps its glad labour,  
 And lets the gold go—  
 And ambition that sees a sun lead it—  
 Oh, all of these—all  
 Combine to unite in one creature  
 —Saul !

END OF PART THE FIRST.

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### Time's Revenges.

I'VE a Friend, over the sea ;  
 I like him, but he loves me ;  
 It all grew out of the books I write ;  
 They find such favour in his sight  
 That he slaughters you with savage looks  
 Because you don't admire my books :  
 He does himself though,—and if some vein  
 Were to snap to-night in this heavy brain,  
 To-morrow month, if I lived to try,  
 Round should I just turn quietly,  
 Or out of the bedclothes stretch my hand  
 'Till I found him, come from his foreign land  
 To be my nurse in this poor place,  
 And make me broth, and wash my face,  
 And light my fire, and, all the while,  
 Bear with his old good-humoured smile  
 That I told him " Better have kept away  
 " Than come and kill me, night and day,  
 " With worse than fever's throbs and shoots,  
 " At the creaking of his clumsy boots."  
 I am as sure that this he would do,  
 As that Saint Paul's is striking Two :  
 And I think I had rather . . . woe is me !  
 —Yes, rather see him than not see,

If lifting a hand would seat him there  
Before me in the empty chair  
To night, when my head aches indeed,  
And I can neither think, nor read,  
And these blue fingers will not hold  
The pen; this garret's freezing cold!

And I've a Lady - There he wakes,  
The laughing fiend and prince of snakes  
Within me, at her name, to pray  
Fate send some creature in the way  
Of my love for her, to be down-torn  
Upthrust and onward borne  
So I might prove myself that sea  
Of passion which I needs must be!  
Call my thoughts false and my fancies quaint,  
And my style infirm, and its figures saint,  
All the critics say, and more blame yet,  
And not one angry word you get!  
But, please you, wonder I would put  
My cheek beneath that Lady's foot  
Rather than trample under mine  
The laurels of the Florentine,  
And you shall see how the Devil spends  
A fire God gave for other ends!  
I tell you, I stride up and down  
This garret, crowned with love's best crown,  
And feasted with love's perfect feast,  
To think I kill for her, at least,  
Body and soul and peace and fame,  
Alike youth's end and manhood's aim,  
—So is my spirit, as flesh with sin,  
Filled full, eaten out and in  
With the face of her, the eyes of her,  
The lips and little chin, the stir  
Of shadow round her mouth; and she

—I'll tell you,—calmly would decree  
 That I should roast at a slow fire,  
 If that would compass her desire  
 And make her one whom they invite  
 To the famous ball to-morrow night.

There may be Heaven; there must be Hell;  
 Meantime, there is our Earth here—well!

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### The Glove.

(PETER RONSARD *loquutus*.)

"HEIGHO," yawned one day King Francis:  
 "Distance all value enhances!  
 "When a man's busy, why, leisure  
 "Strikes him as wonderful pleasure,—  
 "'Faith, and at leisure once is he?  
 "Straightway he wants to be busy.  
 "Here we've got peace: and aghast I'm  
 "Caught thinking war the true pastime!  
 "Is there a reason in meue?  
 "Give us your speech, master Peter!"  
 I who, if mortal dare say so,  
 Ne'er am at loss with my Naso,  
 "Sire," I replied, "joys prove cloudlets:  
 "Men are the merest Ixions"—  
 Here the King whistled aloud, "Let's  
 " . . . Heigho . . . go look at our lions!"  
 Such are the sorrowful chance,  
 If you talk fine to King Francis.

And so, to the courtyard proceeding,  
 Our company, Francis was leading,  
 Increased by new followers tenfold

Before he arrived at the penfold :  
 Lords, ladies, like clouds which bedizen  
 At sunset the western horizon.  
 And Sir De Lorge pressed 'mid the foremost  
 With the dame he professed to adore most—  
 Oh, what a face ! One by fits eyed  
 Her, and the horrible pitside ;  
 For the penfold surrounded a hollow  
 Which led where the eye scarce dared follow,  
 And shelved to the chamber secluded  
 Where Bluebeard, the great lion, brooded.  
 The King hailed his keeper, an Arab  
 As glossy and black as a scarab,  
 And bade him make sport and at once stir  
 Up and out of his den the old monster.  
 They opened a hole in the wire-work  
 Across it, and dropped there a firework,  
 And fled ; one's heart's beating redoubled ;  
 A pause, while the pit's mouth was troubled,  
 The blackness and silence so utter,  
 By the firework's slow sparkling and sputter ;  
 Then earth in a sudden contortion  
 Gave out to our gaze her abortion !  
 Such a brute ! Were I friend Clement Marot  
 (Whose experience of nature's bat narrow,  
 And whose faculties move in no small rust  
 When he versifies David the Psalmist)  
 I should study that brute to describe you  
*Illum Juda Leonem de Tribu !*  
 One's whole blood grew curdling and creep  
 To see the black mane, vast and heapy,  
 The tail in the air stiff and straining,  
 The wide eyes, nor waxing nor waning,  
 As over the barrier which bounded  
 His platform, and us who surrounded  
 The barrier, they reached and they rested

On the space that might stand him in best stead :  
For who knew, he thought, what the amazement,  
The eruption of clatter and blaze meant,  
And if, in this minute of wonder,  
No outlet, 'mid lightning and thunder,  
Lay broad, and, his shackles all shivered,  
The lion at last was delivered ?  
Ay, that was the open sky o'erhead !  
And you saw by the flash on his forehead,  
By the hope in those eyes wide and steady,  
He was leagues in the desert already,  
Driving the flocks up the mountain,  
Or catlike couched hard by the fountain  
To waylay the date-gathering negress :  
So guarded he entrance or egress.  
"How he stands !" quoth the King : "we may well  
swear,  
"No novice, we've won our spurs elsewhere,  
"And so can afford the confession,  
"We exercise wholesome discretion  
"In keeping aloof from his threshold ;  
"Once hold you, those jaws want no fresh hold,  
"Their first would too pleasantly purloin  
"The visitor's brisket or surlain :  
"But who's he would prove so fool-hardy ?  
"Not the best man of Marignan, pardie !"

The sentence no sooner was uttered,  
Than over the rails a glove fluttered,  
Fell close to the lion, and rested :  
The dame 'twas, who flung it and jested  
With life so, De Lorge had been wooing  
For months past ; he sate there pursuing  
His suit, weighing out with nonchalance  
Fine speeches like gold from a balance.

Sound the trumpet, no true knight's a tarrier !

De Lorge made one leap at the barrier,  
 Walked straight to the glove.—while the lion  
 Ne'er moved, kept his far-reaching eye on  
 The palm-tree-edged desert-spring's sapphire,  
 And the musky oiled skin of the Kassir,—  
 Picked it up, and as calmly retreated,  
 Leaped back where the lady was seated,  
 And full in the face of its owner  
 Flung the glove—

“Your heart's queen, you dethrone her?  
 “So should I”—cried the King—“’twas mere vanity,  
 “Not love, set that task to humanity!”  
 Lords and ladies alike turned with loathing  
 From such a proved wolf in sheep's clothing.

Not so, I: for I caught an expression  
 In her brow's undisturbed self-possession  
 Amid the Court's scoffing and merriment,—  
 As if from no pleasing experiment  
 She rose, yet of pain not much heedful  
 So long as the process was needful—  
 As if she had tried in a crucible,  
 To what ‘speeches like gold’ were reducible,  
 And, finding the finest prove copper,  
 Felt the smoke in her face was but proper:  
 To know what she had *not* to trust to,  
 Was worth all the ashes, and dust too.  
 She went on ’nud hooting and laughter;  
 Clement Marot stayed; I followed after,  
 And asked, as a grace, what it all meant  
 If she wished not the rash deed's recalcitrant?  
 “For I”—so I spoke—“am a Poet:  
 “Human nature,—behoves that I know it!”

She told me, ‘Too long had I heard

" Of the deed proved alone by the word :  
" For my love,—what De Loige would not dare !  
" With my scorn—what De Lorge could compare !  
" And the endless descriptions of death  
" He would brave when my lip formed a breath,  
" I must reckon as braved, or, of course,  
" Doubt his word—and moreover, perforce,  
" For such gifts as no lady could spurn,  
" Must offer my love in return.  
" When I looked on your lion, it brought  
" All the dangers at once to my thought,  
" Encountered by all sorts of men,  
" Before he was lodged in his den,—  
" From the poor slave whose club or bare hands  
" Dug the trap, set the snare on the sands,  
" With no King and no Court to applaud,  
" By no shame, should he shrink, overawed,  
" Yet to capture the creature made shift,  
" That his rude boys might laugh at the gift,  
" To the page who last leaped o'er the fence  
" Of the pit, on no greater pretence  
" Than to get back the bonnet he dropped,  
" Lest his pay for a week should be stopped—  
" So, wiser I judged it to make  
" One trial what 'death for my sake'  
" Really meant, while the power was yet mine,  
" Than to wait until time should define  
" Such a phrase not so simply as I,  
" Who took it to mean just 'to die.'  
" The blow a glove gives is but weak—  
" Does the mark yet discolour my cheek ?  
" But when the heart suffers a blow,  
" Will the pain pass so soon, do you know ? "

I looked, as away she was sweeping,  
And saw a youth eagerly keeping



As close as he dared to the doorway:  
 No doubt that a noble should more weigh  
 His life than befits a plebeian;  
 And yet, had our brute been Nemcan--  
 (I judge by a certain calm fervor  
 The youth stepped with, forward to serve her)  
 —He'd have scarce thought you did him the worst turn  
 If you whispered "Friend, what you'd get, first  
 earn!"

And when, shortly after, she carried  
 Her shame from the Court, and they married,  
 To that marriage some happiness, maugre  
 The voice of the Court, I dared augur.

For De Lorge, he made women with men vie,  
 Those in wonder and praise, these in envy;  
 And in short stood so plain a head taller  
 That he wooed and won . . . How do you call her?  
 The beauty, that rose in the sequel  
 To the King's love, who loved her a week well;  
 And 'twas noticed he never would honour  
 De Lorge (who looked daggers upon her)  
 With the easy commission of stretching  
 His legs in the service, and fetching  
 His wife, from her chamber, those straying  
 Sad gloves she was always mislaying,  
 While the King took the closet to chat in,--  
 But of course this adventure came pat in;  
 And never the King told the story,  
 How bringing a glove brought such glory,  
 But the wife smiled—"His nerves are grown firmer—  
 "Mine he brings now and utters no murmur!"

*Venienti occurrere morbo!*  
 With which moral I drop my theorem.

## Claret and Tokay (1845).

## I.

My heart sunk with our Claret-flask,  
Just now, beneath the heavy sedges  
That serve this pond's black face for mask;  
And still at yonder broken edges  
Of the hole, where up the bubbles glisten,  
After my heart I look and listen.

## II.

Our laughing little flask, compell'd  
Thro' depth to depth more bleak and shady;  
As when, both arms beside her held,  
Feet straightened out, some gay French lady  
Is caught up from Life's light and motion,  
And dropped into Death's silent ocean !

Up jumped Tokay on our table,  
Like a pygmy castle-warder,  
Dwarfish to see, but stout and able,  
Arms and accoutrements all in order ;  
And fierce he looked north, then, wheeling south,  
Blew with his bugle a challenge to Drouth,  
Cocked his flap-hat with the tosspot-feather,  
Twisted his thumb in his red moustache,  
Gingled his huge brass spurs together,  
Tightened his waist with its Buda sash,  
And then with an impudence nought could abash,  
Shrugged his hump-shoulder,  
To tell the beholder, [holder,  
For twenty such knaves he should laugh but the  
And so with his sword-hilt gallantly jutting,  
And dexter-hand on his haunch abutting,  
Went the little man from Ausbruch, strutting !

## The Twins.

"Give" and "It-shall-be-given-unto-you."

## I.

GRAND rough old Martin Luther  
 Bloomed fables—flowers on furze,  
 The better the uncouth :  
 Do roses stick like burrs ?

## II.

A beggar asked an alms  
 One day at an abbey door,  
 Said Luther ; but, seized with qualms,  
 The Abbot replied, " We're poor ! "

## III.

" Poor, who had plenty once,  
 " When gifts fell thick as rain :  
 " But they give us nought, for the nonce  
 " And how should we give again ? "

## IV.

Then the beggar, " See your sins !  
 " Of old, unless I err,  
 " Ye had brothers for inmates, twins,  
 " DAIL and DABITUR."

## V.

" While DATE was in good case  
 " DABITUR flourished too :  
 " For DABITUR's lenten face.  
 " No wonder if DATE rue."

## VI.

"Would ye retrieve the one?  
"Try and make plump the other!  
"When DATE's penance is done,  
"DABITUR joins his brother."

## VII.

"Only, beware relapse!"  
The Abbot hung his head.  
This Beggar might be, perhaps,  
An angel, Luther said.

ROBERT BROWNING.

ROME,

*March 30th, 1854.*



## **Sordello.**

1840.

*[The number of the Book has, in the present edition,  
been indicated on each page, and the lines of each  
Book numbered, for convenience of reference — ED.]*



## Sordello.

### BOOK THE FIRST.

Who will, may hear Sordello's story told :  
His story ? Who believes me shall behold  
The man, pursue his fortunes to the end  
Like me ; for as the friendless people's friend  
Spied from his hill-top once, despite the din 5  
And dust of multitudes, Pentapoli  
Named o' the Naked Arm, I single out  
Sordello, compassed murkily about  
With ravage of six long sad hundred years :  
Only believe me. Ye believe ?  
Appears 10  
Verona . . . Never, I should warn you first,  
Of my own choice had this, if not the worst  
Yet not the best expedient, served to tell  
A story I could body forth so well  
By making speak, myself kept out of view, ' 5  
The very man as he was wont to do,  
And leaving you to say the rest for him :  
Since, though I might be proud to see the dim  
Abysmal Past divide its hateful surge,  
Letting of all men this one man emerge 20  
Because it pleased me, yet, that moment past,  
I should delight in watching first to last



His progress as you watch it, not a whit  
 More in the secret than yourselves who sit  
 Fresh-chapleted to listen : but it seems 25  
 Your setters-forth of unexampled themes,  
 Makers of quite new men, producing them  
 Had best chalk broadly on each vesture's hem  
 The wearer's quality, or take his stand  
 Motley on back and pointing-pole in hand 30  
 Beside them ; so for once I face ye, friends,  
 Summoned together from the world's four ends,  
 Dropped down from Heaven or cast up from Hell,  
 To hear the story I propose to tell.  
 Confess now, poets know the dragnet's trick, 35  
 Catching the dead if Fate denies the quick  
 And shaming her ; 'tis not for Fate to choose  
 Silence or song because she can refuse  
 Real eyes to glisten more, real hearts to ache  
 Less oft, real brows turn smoother for our sake : 40  
 I have experienced something of her spite ;  
 But there's a realm wherein she has no sight  
 And I have many lovers : say but few  
 Friends Fate accords me ? Here they are ; now view  
 The host I muster ! Many a lighted face 45  
 Foul with no vestige of the grave's disgrace ;  
 What else should tempt them back to taste our air  
 Except to see how their successors fare ?  
 My audience : and they sit, each ghostly man  
 Striving to look as living as he can, 50  
 Brother by breathing brother ; thou art set,  
 Clear-witted critic, by . . . but I'll not fret  
 A wondrous soul of them, nor move Death's spleen  
 Who loves not to unlock them. Friends ! I mean  
 The living in good earnest—ye elect 55  
 Chiefly for love—suppose not I reject  
 Judicious praise, who contrary shall peep  
 Some fit occasion forth, for fear ye sleep,

To glean your bland approvals. Then, appear,  
 Verona ! stay—thou, spirit, come not near 60  
 Now—nor this time desert thy cloudy place  
 To scare me, thus employed, with that pure face !  
 I need not fear this audience, I make free  
 With them, but then this is no place for thee !  
 The thunder-phrase of the Athenian, grown 65  
 Up out of memories of Marathon,  
 Would echo like his own sword's guiding screech  
 Braying a Persian shield,—the silver speech  
 Of Sidney's self, the starry paladin,  
 Turn intense as a trumpet sounding in 70  
 The knights to tilt—wert thou to hear ! What heart  
 Have I to play my puppets, bear my part  
 Before these worthies ?

Lo, the Past is hurled  
 In twain : upthrust, out-staggering on the world,  
 Subsiding into shape, a darkness rears 75  
 Its outline, kindles at the core, appears  
 Verona. 'Tis six hundred years and more  
 Since an event. The Second Friedrich wore  
 The purple, and the Third Honorius filled  
 The holy chair. That autumn eve was stilled : 80  
 At last remains of sunset dimly burned  
 O'er the far forests like a torch-flame turned  
 By the wind back upon its bearer's hand  
 In one long flare of crimson ; as a brand  
 The woods beneath lay black. A single eye 85  
 From all Verona cared for the soft sky :  
 But, gathering in its ancient market-place,  
 Talked group with restless group ; and not a face  
 But wrath made livid, for among them were  
 Death's staunch purveyors, such as have in care 90  
 To feast him. Fear had long since taken root  
 In every breast, and now these crushed its fruit,  
 The ripe hate, like a wine : to note the way

It worked while each grew drunk ! men grave and grey  
 Stood, with shut eyelids, rocking to and fro, 95  
 Letting the silent luxury trickle slow  
 About the hollows where a heart should be ;  
 But the young guiped with a delirious glee  
 Some foretaste of their first debauch in blood  
 At the fierce news : for, be it understood, 100  
 Envoys apprised Verona that her prince  
 Count Richard of Saint Boniface, joined since  
 A year with Azzo, Este's Lord, to thrust  
 Taurello Salinguerra, prime in trust  
 With Ecelin Romano, from his seat 105  
 Ferrara,—over zealous in the feat  
 And stumbling on a peril unaware,  
 Was captive, "trammelled in his proper snare,"  
 They phrase it, "taken by his own intrigue :"  
 Immediate succour, from the Lombard League 110  
 Of fifteen cities that affect the Pope,  
 For Azzo therefore and his fellow—hope  
 Of the Guelf cause, a glory overcast !  
 Men's faces, late agape, are now aghast :  
 Prone is the purple pavice ; Este makes 115  
 Mirth for the Devil when he undertakes  
 To play the Ecelin ; as if it cost  
 Merely your pushing-by to gain a post  
 Like his ! The patron tells ye, once for all,  
 There be sound reasons that pre'ement fall 120  
 On our beloved . . .

Duke o' the Rood, why not ?  
 Shouted an Estian, grudge ye such a lot ?  
 The hill-cat boasts some cunning of her own,  
 Some stealthy trick to better beasts unknown  
 That quick with prey enough her hunger blunts 125  
 And feeds her fat while gaunt the lion hunts.  
 Taurello, quoth an envoy, as in wane  
 Dwelt at Ferrara. Like an osprey fain

To fly but forced the earth his couch to make  
 Far inland till his friend the tempest wake, 130  
 Waits he the Kaiser's coming; and as yet  
 That fast friend sleeps, and he too sleeps; but let  
 Only the billow freshen, and he snuffs  
 The aroused hurricane ere it enroughs  
 The sea it means to cross because of him : 135  
 Sinketh the breeze? His hope-sick eye grows dim;  
 Creep closer on the creature! Every day  
 Strengthens the Pontiff; Eccehn, they say,  
 Dozes at Olerio, with dry lips  
 Telling upon his perished finger-tips 140  
 How many ancestors are to depose  
 Ere he be Satan's Viceroy when the Goze  
 Deposits him in hell; so Guelfs rebuilt  
 Their houses; not a drop of blood was spilt  
 When Cino Bocchiupane chanced to meet 145  
 Buccio Virtù; God's waser, and the street  
 Is narrow! Tutti Santi, thunk, a-swarm  
 With Ghibellins, and yet he took no harm.  
 This could not last. Off Salinguerra went  
 To Padua, Podestà, with pure intent, 150  
 Said he, my presence, judged the single bar  
 To permanent tranquillity, may jar  
 No longer—so! his back is fairly turned?  
 The pair of goodly palaces are burned,  
 The gardens ravaged, and your Guelf is drunk 155  
 A week with joy; the next, his laughter sunk  
 In sobs of blood, for he found, some strange way,  
 Old Salinguerra back again; I say,  
 Old Salinguerra in the town once more  
 Uprooting, overturning, flame before 160  
 Blood fetlock-high beneath him; Azzo fled;  
 Who scaped the carnage followed; then the dead  
 Were pushed aside from Salinguerra's throne,  
 He ruled once more Ferrara, all alone,

Till Azzo, stunned awhile, revived, would pounce 165  
 Coupled with Boniface, like lynx and ounce,  
 On the gorged bird. The burghers ground their teeth  
 To see troop after troop encamp beneath  
 I' the standing corn thick o'er the scanty patch  
 It took so many patient months to snatch 170  
 Out of the marsh; while just within their walls  
 Men fed on men. Astute Taurello calls  
 A parley: let the Count wind up the war!  
 Richard, light-hearted as a plunging star,  
 Agrees to enter for the kindest ends 175  
 Ferrara, flanked with fifty chosen friends,  
 No horse-boy more for fear your timid sort  
 Should fly Ferrara at the bare report.  
 Quietly through the town they rode, jog-jog;  
 Ten, twenty, thirty . . . curse the catalogue 180  
 Of burnt Gueff houses! Strange Taurello shows  
 Not the least sign of life—whereat arose  
 A general growl: How? With his victors by?  
 I and my Veronese? My troops and I?  
 Receive us, was your word? so jogged they on, 185  
 Nor laughed their host too openly: once gone  
 Into the trap . . .

Six hundred years ago!

Such the time's aspect and peculiar woe  
 (Yourselves may spell it yet in chronicles,  
 Albeit the worm, our busy brother, drills 190  
 His sprawling path through letters anciently  
 Made fine and large to suit some abbot's eye)  
 When the new Hohenstauffen dropped the mask,  
 Flung John of Brienne's favor from his casque,  
 Forsook crusading, had no mind to leave 195  
 Saint Peter's proxy leisure to retrieve  
 Losses to Otho and to Barbaross,  
 Or make the Alps less easy to recross;  
 And, thus confirming Pope Honorius' fear,

Was excommunicate that very year. 200  
 The triple-bearded Teuton come to life !  
 Groaned the Great League ; and, arming for the strife,  
 Wide Lombardy, on tiptoe to begin,  
 Took up, as it was Guelf or Ghibellin,  
 Its cry ; what cry ?  
                     The Emperor to come ! 205  
 His crowd of feudatories, all and some  
 That leapt down with a crash of swords, spears,  
                     shields,  
 One fighter on his fellow, to our fields,  
 Scattered anon, took station here and there,  
 And carried it, till now, with little care— 210  
 Cannot but 'cry for him ; how else rebut  
 Us longer ? Cliffs an earthquake suffered jut  
 In the mid-sea, each domineering crest  
 Nothing save such another throe can wrest  
 From out (conceive) a certain chokeweed grown 215  
 Since o'er the waters, twine and tangle thrown  
 Too thick, too fast accumulating round,  
 Too sure to over-riot and confound  
 Ere long each brilliant islet with itself  
 Unless a second shock save shoal and shelf, 220  
 Whirling the sea-drift wide: alas, the bruised  
 And sullen wreck ! Sunlight to be diffused  
 For that ! Sunlight, 'neath which, a scum at first,  
 The million fibres of our chokeweed nurs't  
 Dispread themselves, mantling the troubled main, 225  
 And, shattered by those rocks, took hold again,  
 So kindly blazed it—that same blaze to brood  
 O'er every cluster of the multitude  
 Still hazarding new clasps, ties, filaments,  
 An emulous exchange of pulses, vents 230  
 Of nature into nature ; till some growth  
 Unfancied yet exuberantly clothe  
 A surface solid now, continuous, one :

The Pope, for us the People, who begun  
 The People, carries on the People thus, 235  
 To keep that Kaiser off and dwell with us !  
 See you ?

Or say. Two Principles that live  
 Each fitly by its R presentative:  
 Hill-cat . . . who called him so, our gracefulest  
 Adventurer ? the ambiguous stranger-guest 240  
 Of Lombardy (sleek but that ruffling fur,  
 Those talons to their sheath !) whose velvet purr  
 Soothes jealous neighbours when a Saxon scout  
 . . . Arpo or Yoland, is it ? one without  
 A country or a name, presumes to couch 245  
 Beside their noblest ; until men avouch  
 That of all Houses in the Trevisan  
 Conrad describes no fitter, rear or van,  
 Than Eccelo ! They laughed as they enrolled  
 That name at Milan on the page of gold 250  
 For Godego, Ramon, Marostica,  
 Cartighion, Bassano, Loria,  
 And every sheep-cote on the Suabian's fief !  
 No laughter when his son, the Lombard Chief  
 Forsooth, as Barbarossa's path was bent 255  
 To Italy along the Vale of Trent.  
 Welcomed him at Roncaglia ! Sadness now—  
 The hamlets nested on the Tyrol's brow,  
 The Asolan and Euganean hills,  
 The Rhetian and the Julian, sadness fills 260  
 Them all that Ecelm vouchsafes to stay  
 Among and care about them ; day by day  
 Choosing this pinnacle, the other spot,  
 A castle building to defend a cot,  
 A cot built for a castle to defend, 265  
 Nothing but castles, castles, nor an end  
 To boasts how mountain ridge may join with ridge  
 By sunken gallery and soaring bridge—

He takes, in brief, a figure that beseems  
 The griesliest nightmare of the Church's dreams, 270  
 A Signory firm-rooted, unestranged  
 From its old interests, and nowise changed  
 By its new neighbourhood; perchance the vaunt  
 Of Otho, "my own Este shall supplant  
 Your Este," come to pass. The sire led in 275  
 A son as cruel; and this Ecelin  
 Had sons, in turn, and daughters sly and tall,  
 And curling and compliant; but for all  
 Romano (so they style him) thrives, that neck  
 Of his so pinched and white, that hungry cheek 280  
 Proved 'tis some fiend, not him, men's flesh is meant  
 To feed: whereas Romano's instrument,  
 Famous Tancello Salinguerra, sole  
 I' the world, a tree whose boughs are split the bole  
 Successively, why should not he shed blood 285  
 To further a design? Men understood  
 Living was pleasant to him as he wore  
 His careless surcoat, glanced some missive o'er,  
 Propped on his truncheon in the public way.  
 Ecelin lifts two writhen hands to pray 290  
 At Oliero's convent now: so, place  
 For Azzo, Lion of the . . . why disgrace  
 A worthiness conspicuous near and far  
 (Atii at Rome while free and consular,  
 Este at Padua to repulse the Hun) 295  
 By trumpeting the Church's princely son  
 Styled Patron of Rovigo's Polesine,  
 Ancona's march, Ferrara's . . . ask, in fine,  
 Our chronicles, commenced when some old monk  
 Found it intolerable to be sunk 300  
 (Vexed to the quick by his revolting cell)  
 Quite out of summer while alive and well:  
 Ended when by his mat the Prior stood,  
 Mid busy promptings of the brotherhood,



Striving to coax from his decrepit brains 305  
 The reason Father Porphyry took pains  
 To blot those ten lines out which used to stand  
 First on their charter drawn by Hildebrand.

The same night wears. Verona's rule of yore  
 Was vested in certain Twenty-four ; 310

And while within his palace these debate  
 Concerning Richard and Ferrara's fate,  
 Glide we by clapping doors, with sudden glare  
 Of cressets vented on the dark, nor care  
 For aught that's seen or heard until we shut 315

The smother in, the lights, all noises but  
 The carroch's booming ; safe at last ! Why strange  
 Such a recess should lurk behind a range

Of banquet-rooms ? Your finger—thus—you push  
 A spring, and the wall opens, would you rush 320

Upon the banqueters, select your prey,  
 Waiting, the slaughter-weapons in the way  
 Strewing this very bench, with sharpened ear  
 A preconcerted signal to appear ;

Or if you simply crouch with beating heart 325  
 Bearing in some voluptuous pageant part  
 To startle them. Nor mutes nor masquers now ;

Nor any . . . does that one man sleep whose brow  
 The dying lamp-flame sinks and rises o'er ?  
 What woman stood beside him ? not the mo: 330

Is he unfastened from the earnest eyes  
 Because that arras fell between ! Her wise  
 And lulling words are yet about the room,  
 Her presence wholly poured upon the gloom

Down even to her vesture's creeping stir : 335  
 And so reclines he, saturate with her,  
 Until an outcry from the square beneath

Pierces the charm : he springs up, glad to breathe  
 Above the cunning element, and shakes

The stupor off as (look you) morning breaks 340

On the gay dress, and, near concealed by it,  
 The lean frame like a half-burnt taper, lit  
 Erst at some marriage-feast, then laid away  
 Till the Armenian bridegroom's dying day,  
 In his wool wedding-robe; for he—for he— 345  
 "Gate-vein of this hearts' blood of Lombardy"  
 (If I should falter now)—for he is Thine!  
 Sordello, thy forerunner, Florentine!  
 A herald-star I know thou didst absorb  
 Relentless into the consummate orb 350  
 That scared it from its right to roll along  
 A sempiternal path with dance and song  
 Fulfilling its allotted period  
 Serenest of the progeny of God  
 Who yet resigns it not; his darling stoops 355  
 With no quenched lights, desponds with no blank  
     troops  
 Of disenfranchised brilliances, for, blent  
 Utterly with thee, its shy element  
 Like thine upburneth prosperous and clear:  
 Still, what if I approach the august sphere 360  
 Named now with only one name, disentwine  
 That under current soft and argentine  
 From its fierce mate in the majestic mass  
 Leavened as the sea whose fire was mixt with glass  
 In John's transcendent vision, launch once more 365  
 That lustre? Dante, pacer of the shore  
 Where gluttred Hell disgorgeth filthiest gloom,  
 Unbitten by its whirring sulphur-spume—  
 Or whence the grieved and obscure waters slope  
 Into a darkness quieted by hope— 370  
 Plucker of amaranths grown beneath God's eye  
 In gracious twilights where his Chosen lie,  
 I would do this! If I should falter now—  
     In Mantua-territory half is slough  
 Half pine-tree forest; maples, scarlet-oaks 375

Breed o'er the river-beds ; even Mincio chokes  
 With sand the summer through ; but 'tis morass  
 In winter up to Mantua walls. There was  
 (Some thirty years before this evening's coil)  
 One spot reclaimed from the surrounding spoil, 380  
 Goito ; just a castle built amid  
 A few low mountains ; firs and larches hid  
 Their main defiles and rings of vineyard bound  
 The rest : some captured creature in a pound,  
 Whose artless wonder quite precludes distress, 385  
 Secure beside in its own loveliness,  
 So peered with airy head, below, above,  
 The castle at its toils the lapwings love  
 To glean among at grape-time. Pass within :  
 A maze of corridors contrived for sin, 390  
 Dusk winding stairs, dim galleries got past,  
 You gain the inmost chambers, gain at last  
 A maple-panelled room : that haze which seems  
 Floating about the panel, if there gleams  
 A sunbeam over it will turn to gold 395  
 And in light-graven characters unfold  
 The Arab's wisdom everywhere ; what shade  
 Marred them a moment, those slim pillars made,  
 Cut like a company of palms to prop  
 The roof, each kissing top entwined with top, 400  
 Leaning together ; in the carver's mind  
 Some knot of bacchanals, flushed cheek combined  
 With straining forehead, shoulders purpled, hair  
 Diffused between, who in a goat-skin bear  
 A vintage ; graceful sister-palms : but quick 405  
 To the main wonder now. A vault, see ; thick  
 Black shade about the ceiling, though fine slits  
 Across the buttress suffer light by fits  
 Upon a marvel in the midst : nay, stoop—  
 A dullish grey-streaked cumbrous font, a group 410  
 Round it, each side of it, where'er one sees,

Upholds it—shrinking Caryatides  
 Of just-tinged marble like Eve's lilyed flesh  
 Beneath her Maker's finger when the flesh  
 First pulse of life shot brightening the snow : 415  
 The font's edge burthens every shoulder, so  
 They muse upon the ground, eyelids half closed,  
 Some, with meek arms behind their backs disposed,  
 Some, crossed above their bosoms, some, to veil  
 Their eyes, some, propping chin and cheek so pale, 420  
 Some, hanging slack an utter helpless length  
 Dead as a buried vestal whose whole strength  
 Goes when the grate above shuts heavily ;  
 So dwell these noiseless girls, patient to see,  
 Like priestesses because of sin impure 425  
 Penanced for ever, who resigned endure,  
 Having that once drunk sweetness to the dregs ;  
 And every eve Sordello's visit begs  
 Pardon for them : constant as eve he came  
 To sit beside each in her turn, the same 430  
 As one of them, a certain space : and awe  
 Made a great indistinctness till he saw .  
 Sunset slant cheerful through the buttress chinks,  
 Gold seven times globed ; surely our maiden shrinks  
 And a smile stirs her as if one faint grain 435  
 Her load were lightened, one shade less the stain  
 Obscured her forehead, yet one more bead slipt  
 From off the rosary whereby the crypt  
 Keeps count of the contritions of its charge ?  
 Then with a step more light, a heart more large, 440  
 He may depart, leave her and every one  
 To linger out the penance in mute stone.  
 Ah, but Sordello ? 'Tis the tale I mean  
 To tell you. In this castle may be seen,  
 On the hill tops, or underneath the vines, 445  
 Or southward by the mound of firs and pines  
 That shuts out Mantua, still in loneliness,

A slender boy in a loose page's dress,  
 Sordello : do but look on him awhile  
 Watching ('tis autumn) with an earnest smile 450  
 The noisy flock of thievish birds at work  
 Among the yellowing vineyards ; see him lurk  
 ('Tis winter with its sullenest of storms)  
 Beside that arras-length of broidered forms.  
 On tiptoe, lifting in both hands a light 455  
 Which makes yon warrior's visage flutter bright  
 —Ecelo, dismal father of the brood,  
 And Ecelin, close to the girl he wooed  
 —Auria, and their Child, with all his wives  
 From Agnes to the Tuscan that survives, 460  
 Lady of the castle, Adelaide : his face  
 —Look, now he turns away ! Yourselves shall trace  
 (The delicate nostril swerving wide and fine,  
 A sharp and restless lip, so well combine-  
 With that calm brow) a soul fit to receive 465  
 Delight at every sense ; you can believe  
 Sordello foremost in the regal class  
 Nature has broadly severed from her mass  
 Of men and framed for pleasure as she frames  
 Some happy lands that have luxurious names 470  
 For loose fertility ; a footfall there  
 Suffices to upturn to the warm air  
 Half-germinating spices, riere decay  
 Produces richer life, and day by day  
 New pollen on the lily-petal grows, 475  
 And still more labyrinthine buds the rose.  
 You recognise at once the finer dress  
 Of flesh that amply lets in loveliness  
 At eye and ear, while round the rest is furled  
 (As though she would not trust them with her  
 world) 480  
 A veil that shows a sky not near so blue,  
 And lets but half the sun look fervid through :

How can such love like souls on each full-fraught  
 Discovery brooding, blind at first to aught  
 Beyond its beauty ; till exceeding love 485  
 Becomes an aching weight, and, to remove  
 A curse that haunts such natures—to preclude  
 Their finding out themselves can work no good  
 To what they love nor make it very blest  
 By their endeavour, they are fain invest 490  
 The lifeless thing with life from their own soul,  
 Availing it to purpose, to control,  
 To dwell distinct and have peculiar joy  
 And separate interests that may employ  
 That beauty fitly, for its proper sake ; 495  
 Nor rest they here fresh births of beauty wake  
 Fresh homage ; every grade of love is past,  
 With every mode of loveliness ; then cast  
 Inferior idols off their borrowed crown  
 Before a coming glory : up and down 500  
 Runs arrowy fire, while earthly forms combine  
 To throb the secret forth ; a touch divine—  
 And the scaled eyeball owns the mystic rod :  
 Visibly through his garden walketh God.  
 So fare they—Now revert : one character 505  
 Denotes them through the progress and the stir ;  
 A need to blend with each external charm,  
 Bury themselves, the whole heart wide and warm,  
 In something not themselves ; they would belong  
 To what they worship—stronger and more strong 510  
 Thus prodigally fed—that gathers shape  
 And feature, soon imprisons past escape  
 The votary framed to love and to submit  
 Nor ask, as passionate he kneels to it,  
 Whence grew the idol's empery. So runs 515  
 A legend ; Light had birth ere moons and suns,  
 Flowing through space a river and alone,  
 Till chaos burst and blank the spheres were strown

Hither and thither, foundering and blind,  
 When into each of them rushed Light to find 520  
 Itself no place, foiled of its radiant chance  
 Let such forgo their just inheritance !  
 For there's a class that eagerly looks, too,  
 On beauty, and, unlike the gentler crew,  
 Proclaims each new revelation born a twin 525  
 With a distinctest consciousness within  
 Referring still the quality, now first  
 Revealed, to their own soul ; its instinct nursed  
 In silence, now remembered better, shown  
 More thoroughly, but not the less their own ; 530  
 A dream come true ; the special exercise  
 Of any special function that implies  
 The being fair or good or wise or strong,  
 Dormant within their nature all along—  
 Whose fault ? So homage other souls direct 535  
 Without, turns inward ; how should this deject  
 Thee, soul ? they murmur ; wherefore strength be  
     quelled  
 Because, its trivial accidents withheld,  
 Organs are missed that clog the world, inert,  
 Wanting a will, to quicken and exert, 540  
 Like thine—existence cannot satiate,  
 Cannot surprise : laugh thou at envious fate,  
 Who from earth's simplest combination snatch  
 With individuality—uncrampt  
 By living its faint elemental life, 545  
 Dost soar to heaven's completest essence, rise  
 With grandeurs, unaffronted to the last,  
 Equal to being all.

                                    In truth ? Thou hast  
 Life, then—wilt challenge life for us : thy race  
 Is vindicated so, obtains its place 550  
 In thy ascent, the first of us ; whom we  
 May follow, to the meanest, finally,

With our more bounded wills?

Ah, but to find

A certain mood enervate such a mind,  
Counsel it slumber in the solitude 555

Thus reached nor, stooping, task for mankind's good  
Its nature just as life and time accord

(Too narrow an area to reward  
Emprize—the world's occasion worthless since  
Not absolutely fitted to evince 560

Its mastery), or if yet worse befall,  
And a desire possess it to put all

That nature forth, forcing our straitened sphere  
Contain it; to display completely here  
The mastery another life should learn, 565

Thrusting in time eternity's concern,  
So that Sordello. . . . Fool, who spied the mark

Of leprosy upon him, violet dark  
Already as he loiters? Born just now —

With the new century—beside the glow 570  
And efflorescence out of barbarism;

Witness a Greek or two from the abyss  
That stray through Florence-town with studious air,

Calming the chisel of that Pisan pair . . .  
If Nicolo should carve a Christus yet ! 575

While at Siena is Gu'done set,  
Forehead on hand ; a painful birth must be

Matured ere San Eufemio's sacristy  
Or transept gather fruits of one great grace

At the noon-sun : look you ! An orange haze- 580  
The same blue stripe round that—and, i' the mist,

Thy spectral whiteness, mother-maid, who didst  
Pursue the dizzy painter !

Woe then worth

Any officious babble letting forth  
The leprosy confirmed and ruinous 585

To spirit lodged in a contracted house !



Go back to the beginning rather ; blend  
 It gently with Sordello's life ; the end  
 Is piteous, you shall see, but much between  
 Pleasant enough ; meantime some pyx to screen 590  
 The full-grown pest, some lid to shut upon  
 The goblin ! As they found at Babylon,  
 (Colleagues mad Lucius and sage Antonine)  
 Sacking the city, by Apollo's shine  
 Its pride,—in rummaging the rarities, 595  
 A cabinet ; be sure, who made the prize  
 Opened it greedily ; and out there curled  
 Just such another plague, for half the world  
 Was stung. Crawl in then, hag, and crouch asquat,  
 Keeping that blotchy bosom thick in spot 600  
 Until your time is ripe ! The coffer-lid  
 Is fastened and the coffer safely hid  
 Under the Loxian's choicest gifts of gold.  
 Who will may hear Sordello's story told,  
 And how he never could remember when 605  
 He dwelt not at Goito ; calmly then  
 About this secret lodge of Adelaide's  
 Glided his youth away : beyond the glades  
 On the fir-forest's border, and the rim  
 Of the low range of mountain, was for him 610  
 No other world : but that appeared his own  
 To wander through at pleasure and alone.  
 The castle too seemed empty ; far and wide  
 Might he-disport unless the northern side  
 Lay under a mysterious interdict— 615  
 Slight, just enough remembered to restrict  
 His roaming to the corridors, the vault  
 Where those font-bearers expiate their fault,  
 The maple-chamber, and the little nooks  
 And nests and breezy parapet that looks 620  
 Over the woods to Mantua ; there he strolled.  
 Some foreign women-servants, very old,

Tended and crept about him—all his clue  
 To the world's business and embroiled ado  
 Distant a dozen hill-tops at the most. 625  
 And first a simple sense of life engrossed  
 Sordello in his drowsy Paradise;  
 The day's adventures for the day suffice—  
 Its constant tribute of perceptions strange  
 With sleep and stir in healthy interchange 630  
 Suffice, and leave him for the next at ease  
 Like the great palmer-worm that strips the trees,  
 Eats the life out of every luscious plant,  
 And when September finds them sere or scant  
 Puts forth two wondrous winglets, alters quite, 635  
 And hies him after unforeseen delight;  
 So fed Sordello, not a shard disheathed;  
 As ever round each new discovery wreathed  
 Luxuriantly the fancies infantine  
 His admiration, bent on making fine 640  
 Its novel friend at any risk, would fling  
 In gay profusion forth: a ficklest king  
 Confessed those minions! Eager to dispense  
 So much from his own stock of thought and sense  
 As might enable each to stand alone 645  
 And serve him for a fellow; with his own  
 Joining the qualities that just before  
 Had graced some older favourite: so they wore  
 A fluctuating halo, yesterday  
 Set flicker and to-morrow filched away; 650  
 Those upland objects each of separate name,  
 Each with an aspect never twice the same,  
 Waxing and waning as the new-born host  
 Of fancies, like a single night's hoar-frost,  
 Gave to familiar things a face grotesque; 655  
 Only, preserving through the mad burlesque  
 A grave regard: conceive; the orpine patch  
 Blossoming earliest on the log-house-thatch

The day those archers wound along the vines—  
 Related to the Chief that left their lines 660  
 To climb with clinking step the northern stair  
 Up to the solitary chambers where  
 Sordello never came. Thus thrall reached thrall;  
 He o'er-festooned every interval  
 As the adventurous spider, making light 665  
 Of distance, shoots her threads from depth to height,  
 From barbican to battlement; so flung  
 Fantasies forth and in their centre swung  
 Our architect: the breezy morning fresh  
 Above, and merry; all his waving mesh 670  
 Laughing with lucid dew-drops rainbow edged.  
 This world of ours by tacit pact is pledged  
 To laying such a spangled fabric low  
 Whether by gradual blush or gallant blow:  
 But its abundant will was balked here: doubt 675  
 Rose tardily in one so fenced about  
 From most that nurtures judgment, care and pain:  
 Judgment, that dull expedient we are fain,  
 Less favoured, to adopt betimes and force  
 Stead us, diverted from our natural course 680  
 Of joys, contrive some yet amid the dearth,  
 Vary and render them, it may be, worth  
 Most we forego: suppose Sordello hence  
 Selfish enough, without a moral sense 685  
 However feeble, what informed the boy  
 Others desired a portion in his joy?  
 Or say a ruthless chance broke woof and warp—  
 A heron's nest beat down by March winds sharp,  
 A fawn breathless beneath the precipice,  
 A bird with unsoiled breast and filmless eyes 690  
 Warm in the brake—could these undo the trance  
 Lapping Sordello? Not a circumstance  
 That makes for you, friend Naddo! Eat fern-seed  
 And peer beside us and report indeed

If (your word) Genius dawned with throcs and stings  
 And the whole fiery catalogue, while springs 696  
 Summers and winters quietly came and went,  
 Putting at length that period to content  
 By right the world should have imposed : bereft  
 Of its good offices, Sordello, left 700  
 To study his companions, managed up  
 Their fringe off, learn the true relationship,  
 Core with its crust, their natures with his own ;  
 Amid his wild-wood sights he lived alone :  
 As if the poppy felt with him ! Though he 705  
 Partook the poppy's red effrontery  
 Till Autumn spoils their fleering quite with rain,  
 And, turbanless, a coarse brown rattling crane  
 Protrudes : that's gone ! yet why renounce, for that,  
 His disenchanted tributaries—flat 710  
 Perhaps, but scarce so utterly forlorn  
 Their simple presence may not well be borne  
 Whose parley was a transport once : recall  
 The poppy's gifts, it flaunts you, after all,  
 A poppy : why distrust the evidence 715  
 Of each soon satisfied and healthy sense ?  
 The new-born Judgment answered, little boots  
 Beholding other creatures' attributes  
 And having none : or say that it sufficed,  
 Yet, could one but possess, oneself, (enticed 720  
 Judgment) some special office ! Nought beside  
 Serves you ? Well then, be somehow justified  
 For this ignoble wish to circumscribe  
 And concentrate, rather than swell, the tribe  
 Of actual pleasures : what now from without 725  
 Effects it ?—proves, despite a lurking doubt,  
 Mere sympathy sufficient, trouble spared ;  
 He tasted joys by proxy, clearly fared  
 The better for them ? thus much craved his soul.  
 Alas, from the beginning Love is whole 730

And true ; if sure of nought beside, most sure  
 Of its own truth at least ; nor may endure  
 A crowd to see its face, that cannot know  
 How hot the pulses throb its heart below ;  
 While its own helplessness and utter want 735  
 Of means to worthily be ministrant  
 To what it worships, do but fan the more  
 Its flame, exalt the idol far before  
 Itself as it would have it ever be ;  
 Souls like Sordello, on the contrary, 740  
 Coerced and put to shame, retaining Will,  
 Care little, take mysterious comforts still,  
 But look forth tremblingly to ascertain  
 If others judge their claims not urged in vain  
 —Will say for them their stifled thoughts aloud ; 745  
 So they must ever live before a crowd :  
 Vanity, Naddo tells you.

Whence contrive  
 A crowd, now ? These brave women just alive,  
 That archer-troop ? Forth glided—not alone  
 Each painted warrior, every girl of stone, 750  
 —Nor Adelaide bent double o'er a scroll,  
 One maiden at her knees, that ere his soul  
 Shook as he stumbled through the arras'd glooms  
 On them, for, 'mid quaint robes and weird perfumes,  
 Started the meagre Tuscan up (her eyes, 755  
 The maiden's also, bluer with surprise)  
 —But the entire out-world : whatever scraps  
 And snatches, song and story, dreams perhaps,  
 Conceited the world's offices, and he  
 Transferred to the first-come, flower or tree, 760  
 Not counted a befitting heritage  
 Each, of its own right, singly to engage  
 Some Man, no other ; such availed to stand  
 Alone : strength, wisdom, grace on every hand  
 Soon disengaged themselves ; and he discerned 765

A sort of human life : at least, was turned  
 A stream of life-like figures through his brain  
 Lord, Liegeman, Valvassor and Suzerain,  
 Ere he could choose, surrounded him ; a stuff  
 To work his pleasure on ; there, sure enough, 770  
 But as for gazing, what shall fix that gaze ?  
 Are they to simply testify the ways  
 He who convoked them sends his soul along  
 With the cloud's thunder or a dove's blood-song ?  
 While they live each his life, boast each his own 775  
 Peculiar dower of bliss, stand each alone  
 In some one point where something dearest loved  
 Is easiest gained—far worthier to be proved  
 Than aught he envies in the forest-wights !  
 No simple and self-evident delights, 780  
 But mixed desires of unimagined range,  
 Contrasts or combinations, new and strange,  
 Irsome perhaps, yet plainly recognised  
 By this, the sudden company—loves prized  
 By those who are to prize his own amount 785  
 Of loves. Once care because such make account,  
 Allow a foreign recognition stamp  
 The current value, and your crowd shall vamp  
 You counterfeits enough ; and so their print  
 Be on the piece, 'tis gold, attests the mint 790  
 And good, pronounce they whom my new appeal  
 Is made to : if their casual print conceal—  
 This arbitrary good of theirs o'ergloss  
 What I have lived without, nor felt my loss—  
 Qualities strange, ungainly, wearisome, 795  
 —What matter ? so must speech expand the dumb  
 Part sigh, part smile with which Sordello, late  
 No foolish woodland-sights could satiate,  
 Betakes himself to study hungrily  
 Just what the puppets his crude fantasy 800  
 Supposes notabest, popes, kings, priests, knights,

May please to promulgate for appetites ;  
 Accepting all their artificial joys  
 Not as he views them, but as he employs  
 Each shape to estimate the other's stock 805  
 Of attributes, that on a marshalled flock  
 Of authorised enjoyments he may send  
 Himself, be Men, now, as he used to blend  
 With tree and flower—nay more entirely, else  
 'Twere mockery: for instance, how excels 810  
 My life that Chieftain's? (who apprised the youth  
 Ecelin, here, becomes this month in truth,  
 Imperial Vicar?) Turns he in his tent  
 Remissly? Be it so—my head is bent  
 Deliciously amid my girls to sleep: 815  
 What if he stalks the Trentine-pass? Yon steep  
 I climbed an hour ago with little toil—  
 We are alike there: but can I, too, toil  
 The Guelfs' paid staliber, carelessly afford  
 St. Mark's a spectacle, the sleight o' the sword 820  
 Baffling their project in a moment? Here  
 No rescue! Poppy he is none, but peer  
 To Ecelin, assuredly: his hand,  
 Fashioned no otherwise, should wield a brand  
 With Ecelin's success—try, now! He soon 825  
 Was satisfied, returned as to the moon  
 From earth; left each abortive boy's-attempt  
 For feats, from failure happily exempt,  
 In fancy at his beck. One day I will  
 Accomplish it! Are they not older still 830  
 —Not grown up men and women? 'Tis beside  
 Only a dream; and though I must abide  
 With dreams now, I may find a thorough vent  
 For all myself, acquire an instrument  
 For acting what these people act; my soul 835  
 Hunting a body out, obtain its whole  
 Desire some day! How else express chagrin

And resignation, show the hope steal in  
 With which he let sink from an aching wound  
 The rough-hewn ash-bow, and a gold shaft hiss'd 810  
 Into the Syrian air, struck Malek down  
 Superbly ! Crosses to the breach ! God's frown  
 Is gained I hum back ! Why bend rough ash bows more ?

So lives he : if not careless as before,  
 Comforted : for one may anticipate, 845

Rehearse the future ; be prepared when fate  
 Shall have prepared in turn real men whose names  
 Startle, real places of enormous fumes,

Estes abroad and Eccelins at home

To worship him, Mantuas, Veronas, Rome 850

To witness it. Who grudges time so spent ?

Rather test qualities to heart's content—

Summon them, thrice selected, near and far—

Compress the starriest into one star,

So grasp the whole at once ! The pageant's thinned 855

Accordingly ; from rank to rank, like wind

His spirit passed to winnow and divide ;

Back fell the sunpler phantasms ; every side

The strong clave to the wise ; with either classed

The beautiful ; so, till two or three amassed 860

Mankind's besecmingnesses, and reduced

Themselves eventually, graces loosed,

And lavished strengths, to heighten up One Shape

Whose potency no creature should escape :

Can it be Friedrich of the bowmen's talk ? 865

Surely that grape-juice, bubbling at the stalk,

Is some grey scorching Saracenic wine

The Kaiser quaffs with the Miramoline—

Those swarthy hazel-clusters, scamed and chapped,

Or filberts russet-sheathed and velvet-capped, 870

Are dates plucked from the bough John Brienne sent

To keep in mind his sluggish annament

Of Canaan . . . Friedrich's, all the pomp and fierce



Demeanour ! But harsh sounds and sights transpierce  
 So rarely the serene cloud where he dwells 875  
 Whose looks enjoin, whose lightest words are spells  
 Upon the obdurate ; that arm indeed  
 Has thunder for 's slave ; but where's the need  
 Of thunder if the stricken multitude  
 Harkens, arrested in its angriest mood, 880  
 While songs go up exulting, then dispread,  
 Dispart, disperse, lingering overhead  
 Like an escape of angels ? 'Tis the tune,  
 Nor much unlike the words the women croon  
 Smilingly, colourless and faint designed 885  
 Each, as a worn-out queen's face some remind  
 Of her extreme youth's love-tales. Eglamor  
 Made that ! Half minstrel and half emperor,  
 Who but ill objects veiled him ? Such he slew.  
 The kinder sort were easy to subdue 890  
 By those ambrosial glances, dulcet tones ;  
 And these a gracious hand advanced to thrones  
 Beneath him. Wherefore twist and torture this,  
 Striving to name afresh the antique bliss,  
 Instead of saying, neither less nor more, 895  
 He had discovered, as our world before  
 Apollo ? That shall be the name ; nor bid  
 Me rag by rag expose how patchwork hid  
 The man—what thefts of every crime and day  
 Contributed to purfle the array 900  
 He climbed with (June's at deep) some close ravine  
 'Mid clatter of 's million pebbles sheen,  
 Over which singing soft the runnel slipt  
 Flate with rains : into whose streamlet dipt  
 He foot, yet trod, you thought, with unwet sock— 905  
 Though really on the stubs of living rock  
 Ages ago it crenneled ; vines for roof,  
 Lindens for wall ; before him, aye aloof,  
 Flittered in the cool some azure damsel-fly,

Child of the simmering quiet, there to die : 910  
 Emerging whence, Apollo still, he spied  
 Mighty descents of forest ; multiplied  
 Tuft on tuft, here, the frolic myrtle-trees ;  
 There gendered the grave maple-stocks at ease ;  
 And, proud of its observer, strait the wood 915  
 Tried old surprises on him ; black it stood  
 A sudden barrier ('twas a cloud passed o'er)  
 So dead and dense the tiniest brute no more  
 Must pass ; yet presently (the cloud despatched)  
 Each clump, forsooth, was glistening detached 920  
 A shrub, oak-boles shrunk into ilex-stems !  
 Yet could not he denounce the stratagems  
 He saw thro', till, hours thence, aloft would hang  
 White summer-lightnings ; as it sank and sprang  
 In measure, that whole palpitating breast 925  
 Of Heaven, 'twas Apollo nature prest  
 At eve to worship.

Time stole : by degrees  
 The Pythons perished off ; his votaries  
 Sink to respectful distance ; songs redeem  
 Their pains, but briefer ; their dismissals seem 930  
 Emphatic ; only girls are very slow  
 To disappear—his Delians ! Some that glow  
 O' the instant, more with earlier loves to wrench  
 Away, reserves to quell, disdains to quench ;  
 Alike in one material circumstance— 935  
 All soon or late adore Apollo ! Glance  
 The bevy through, divine Apollo's choice,  
 A Daphne ! We secure Count Richard's voice  
 In Este's counsels, one for Este's ends  
 As our Taurello, say his faded friends, 940  
 By granting him our Palma ! The sole child,  
 They mean, of Agnes Este who beguiled  
 Ecelin, years before this Adelaide  
 Wedded and turned him wicked ; but the maid

Rejects his suit, those sleepy women boast. 945  
 She, scorning all beside, deserves the most  
 Sordello : so conspicuous in his world  
 Of dreams save Palma. How the tresses curled  
 Into a sumptuous swell of gold and wound  
 About her like a glory, even the ground 950  
 Was bright as with shed sunbeams; (breathe not, breathe  
 Not)—poised, see, one leg doubled underneath,  
 Its small foot buried in the dimpling snow,  
 Rests, but the other, listlessly below,  
 O'er the couch-side swings feeling for cool air, 955  
 The vein-streaks swollen a richer violet where  
 The languid blood lies heavily; and calm  
 On her slight prop, each flat and outspread palm,  
 As but suspended in the act to rise  
 By consciousness of beauty, whence her eyes 960  
 Turn with so frank a triumph, for she meets  
 Apollo's gaze in the pine-glooms.

Time fleets  
 That's worst ! Because the pre-appointed age  
 Approaches. Fate is tardy with the stage  
 She all but promised. Lean he grows and pale, 965  
 Though restlessly at rest. Hardly avail  
 Fancies to soothe him. Time steals, yet alone  
 He tarries here ! The earnest smile is gone.  
 How long this might continue he atters not :  
 For ever, possibly ; since to the not 970  
 None come : our lingering Tanrello quits  
 Mantua at last, and light our lady flits  
 Back to her place disburthened of a care.  
 Strange—to be constant here if he is there !  
 Is it distrust ? Oh, never ! for they both 975  
 Goad Feelin alike—Romano's growth  
 So daily manifest that Azzo's dumb  
 And Richard wavers . . . let but Friedrich come !  
 —Find matter for the minstrelsy's report

Lured from the Isle and its young Kaiser's court	980
To sing us a Messina morning up;	
Who, double rillets of a drinking cup,	
Sparkle along to ease the land of drouth,	
Northward to Provence that, and thus far south	
The other : what a method to apprise	985
Neighbours of births, espousals, obsequies !	
Which in their very tongue the Troubadour	
Records ; and his performance makes a tour,	
For Trouveres bear the miracle about,	
Explain its cunning to the vulgar rout,	990
Until the Formidable House is famed	
Over the country—as Tanello aimed	
Who introduced, although the rest adopt,	
The novelty. Such games her absence stopped	
Begin afresh now Adelaide, recluse	995
No longer, in the light of day pursues	
Her plans at Mantua—whence an accident	
That, breaking on Sordello's mixed content	
Opened, like any flash that cures the blind,	
The veritable business of mankind.	1000

## BOOK THE SECOND.

THE woods were long austere with snow : at last  
Pink leaflets budded on the beech, and fast  
Larches, scattered through pine-tree solitudes,  
Brightened, "as in the slumbrous heart o' the woods  
Our buried year, a witch, grew young again 5  
To placid incantations, and that stain  
About were from her caldron, green smoke blent  
With those black pines"—so Glamor gave vent  
To a chance fancy : whence a just rebuke  
From his companion ; brother Naddo shook 10  
The solemnest of brows : Beware, he said,  
Of setting up conceits in Nature's stead !  
Forth wandered our Sordello. Nought so sure  
As that to day's adventure will secure  
Palma, the forest-lady—only pass 15  
O'er yon damp mound and its exhausted grass,  
Under that brake where sun-dawn feeds the stalks  
Of withered fern with gold, into those walks  
Of pines and take her ! Buoyantly he went.  
Again his sloping forehead was besprent 20  
With dew-drops from the skirting ferns. Then wide  
Opened the great morass, shot every side  
With flashing water through and through ; a-shine,  
Thick steaming, all alive. Whose shape divine  
Quivered i' the farthest rainbow-vapour, glanced 25  
Athwart the flying herons ? He advanced,  
But warily ; though Mincio leaped no more,

Each foot-fall burst up in the marish-floor  
 A diamond jet : and if you stooped to pick  
 Rose-lichen, or molest the leeches quick, 30  
 And circling blood-worms, minnow, newt or loach,  
 A sudden pond would silently encroach  
 This way and that. On Palma passed. The verge  
 Of a new wood was gained. She will emerge  
 Flushed, now, and panting ; crowds to see ; will own 35  
 She loves him—Boniface to hear, to groan,  
 To leave his suit ! One screen of pine-trees still  
 Opposes : but—the startling spectacle—  
 Mantua, this time ! Under the walls—a crowd  
 Indeed—real men and women—gay and loud 40  
 Round a pavilion. How he stood !

In truth

No prophecy had come to pass : his youth  
 In its prime now—and where was homage poured  
 Upon Sordello ?—born to be adored,  
 And suddenly discovered weak, scarce made 45  
 To cope with any, cast into the shade  
 By this and this. Yet something seemed to prick  
 And tingle in his blood ; a sleight—a trick—  
 And much would be explained. It went for naught—  
 The best of their endowments were ill bought 50  
 With his identity : nay, the conceit  
 This present roving leads to Palma's feet  
 Was not so vain . . . list ! The word, Palma ? Steal  
 Aside, and die, Sordello ; this is real,  
 And this—abjure !

What next ? The curtains, &c, 55

Dividing ! She is there ; and presently  
 He will be there—the proper You, at length—  
 In your own cherished dress of grace and strength :  
 Most like the very Boniface . . .

Not so.

It was a showy man advanced ; but though 60

A glad cry welcomed him, then every sound  
 Sank and the crowd disposed themselves around,  
 —This is not he, Sordello felt; while "Place  
 For the best Troubadour of Boniface,"  
 Hollaed the Jongleurs, "Eglamor whose lay, 65  
 Concludes his patron's Court of Love to-day."  
 Obscquious Naddo strung his master's lute  
 With the new lute-string, Elys, named to suit  
 The song. He stealthily at watch, the while,  
 Biting his lip to keep down a great smile 70  
 Of pride: then up he struck. Sordello's brain  
 Swam; for he knew a sometime deed again;  
 So could supply each foolish gap and chasm  
 The minstrel left in his enthusiasm,  
 Mistaking its true version—was the tale 75  
 Not of Apollo? Only, what avail  
 Luring her down, that Elys an he pleased,  
 If the man dares no further? Has he ceased?  
 And, lo, the people's frank applause half done,  
 Sordello was beside him, had begun 80  
 (Spite of indignant twitchings from his friend  
 The Trouvere) the true lay with the true end,  
 Taking the other's names and time and place  
 For his. On flew the song, a giddy race,  
 After the flying story; word made leap 85  
 Out word; rhyme—rhyme; the lay could barely keep  
 Pace with the action visibly rushing past:  
 Both ended. Back fell Naddo more aghast  
 Than your Egyptian from the harassed bull  
 That wheels abrupt and, bellowing, fronts full 90  
 His plague, who spies a scarab 'neath his tongue,  
 And found 'twas Apis' flank his hasty prong  
 Insulted. But the people—but the cries,  
 The crowding round, and proffering the prize!  
 (For he had gained some prize)—He seemed to  
 shrink 95

Into a sleepy cloud, just at whose brink  
 One sight withheld him ; there sat Adelaide,  
 Silent ; but at her knees the very maid  
 Of the North Chamber, her red lips as rich,  
 The same pure fleecy hair ; one curl of which, 100  
 Golden and great, quite touched his cheek as o'er  
 She leant, speaking some six words and no more ;  
 He answered something, anything ; and she  
 Unbound a scarf and laid it heavily  
 Upon him, her neck's warmth and all ; again 105  
 Moved the arrested magic ; in his brain  
 Noises grew, and a light that turned to glare,  
 And greater glare, until the intense flare  
 Engulfed him, shut the whole scene from his sense,  
 And when he woke 'twas many a furlong thence, 110  
 At home : the sun shining his ruddy wont ;  
 The customary birds'-chiip ; but his front  
 Was crowned—was crowned ! Her scented scarf  
 around

His neck ! Whose gorgeous vesture heaps the ground ?  
 A prize ? He turned, and peeringly on him 115  
 Brooded the women faces, kind and dim,  
 Ready to talk. The Jongleurs in a troop  
 Had brought him back, Naddo and Squarcialupe  
 And Tagliafer ; how strange ! a childhood spent  
 Assuming, well for him, so brave a bent ! 120  
 Since Eglamor, they heard, was dead with spite,  
 And Palma chose him for her minstrel.

Light

Sordello rose—to think, now ; hitherto  
 He had perceived. Sure a discovery grew  
 Out of it all ! Best live from first to last 125  
 The transport o'er again. A week he passed  
 Sucking the sweet out of each circumstance,  
 From the bard's outbreak to the luscious trance  
 Bounding his own achievement. Strange ! A man



Recounted that adventure, and began 130  
 Imperfectly; his own task was to fill  
 The frame-work up, sing well what he sung ill,  
 Supply the necessary points, set loose  
 As many incidents of little use  
 —More imbecile the other, not to see 135  
 Their relative importance clear as he  
 But for a special pleasure in the act  
 Of singing—had he ever turned, in fact,  
 From Elys, to sing Elys?—from each fit  
 Of rapture, to contrive a song of it? 140  
 True, this snatch or the other seemed to wind  
 Into a treasure, helped himself to find  
 A beauty in himself; for, see, he soared  
 By means of that mere snatch to many a hoard  
 Of fancies; as some falling cone bears oft 145  
 The eye along the fir-tree-spire, aloft  
 To a dove's nest. Then how divine the cause  
 Such a performance should exact applause  
 From men if they have fancies too? Can Fate  
 Decree they find a beauty separate 150  
 In the poor snatch itself . . . our Elys, there,  
 ("Her head that's sharp and perfect like a pear,  
 So close and smooth are laid the few fine locks  
 Coloured like honey oozed from topmost rocks  
 Sun-blanced the livelong summer")—if they heard 155  
 Just those two rhymes, assented at my word,  
 And loved them as I love them who have run  
 These fingers through those fine locks, let the sun  
 Into the white cool skin . . . nay, thus I clutch  
 Those locks!—I needs must be a God to such. 160  
 Or if some few, above themselves, and yet  
 Beneath me, like their Eglamor, have set  
 An impress on our gift? So men believe  
 And worship what they know not, nor receive  
 Delight from. Have they fancies—slow, perchance, 165

Not at their beck, which indistinctly glance  
 Until by song each floating part be linked  
 To each, and all grow palpable, distinct ?  
 He pondered this.

Meanwhile sounds low and drear  
 Stole on him, and a noise of footsteps, near 170  
 And nearer, and the underwood was pushed  
 Aside, the larches grazed, the dead leaves crushed  
 At the approach of men. The wind seemed laid ;  
 Only, the trees shrunk slightly and a shade  
 Came o'er the sky although 'twas midday yet : 175  
 You saw each half shut downcast violet  
 Flutter—a Roman bride, when they dispart  
 Her unbound tresses with the Sabine dart,  
 Holding that famous rape in memory still,  
 Felt creep into her curls the iron chill, 180  
 And looked thus, Eglamor would say—indeed  
 'Tis Eglamor, no other, these precede  
 Home hither in the woods. 'Twere surely sweet  
 Far from the scene of one's forlorn defeat  
 To sleep ! thought Naddo, who in person led 185  
 Jongleurs and Trouveres, chanting at their head,  
 A scanty company ; for, sooth to say,  
 Our beaten Troubadour had seen his day :  
 Old worshippers were something shamed, old friends  
 Nigh weary ; still the death proposed amends : 190  
 Let us but get them safely through my song  
 And home again, quoth Naddo.

All along,  
 This man (they rest the bier upon the sand)  
 —This calm corpse with the loose flowers in its hand,  
 Eglamor, lived Sordello's opposite : 195  
 For him indeed was Naddo's notion right  
 And Verse a temple-worship vague and vast,  
 A ceremony that withdrew the last  
 Opposing bolt, looped back the lingering veil

Which hid the holy place—should one so frail 200  
 Stand there without such effort ? or repine  
 That much was blank, uncertain at the shrine  
 He knelt before, till, soothed by many a rite,  
 The Power responded, and some sound or sight 205  
 Grew up, his own forever ! to be fixed  
 In rhyme, the beautiful, forever ; mixed  
 With his own life, unloosed when he should please,  
 Having it safe at hand, ready to ease  
 All pain, remove all trouble ; every time  
 He loosed that fancy from its bonds of rhyme, 210  
 Like Perseus when he loosed his naked love,  
 Faltering ; so distinct and far above  
 Himself, these fancies ! He, no genius rare,  
 Transfiguring in fire or wave or air  
 At will, but a poor gnome that, cloistered up, 215  
 In some rock-chamber with his agate cup,  
 His topaz rod, his seed-pearl, in these few  
 And their arrangement finds enough to do  
 For his best art. Then, how he loved that art !  
 The calling marking him a man apart 220  
 From men—one not to care, take counsel for  
 Cold hearts, comfortless faces (Eglamor  
 Was neediest of his tribe) since verse, the gift,  
 Was his, and men, the whole of them, must shift  
 Without it, e'en content themselves with wealth 225  
 And pomp and power, snatching a life by stealth.  
 So Eglamor was not without his pride !  
 The sorriest bat which cowers through noontide  
 While other birds are jocund, has one time  
 When moon and stars are blinded, and the prime 230  
 Of earth is its to claim, nor find a peer ;  
 And Eglamor was noblest poet here,  
 He knew, among the April woods he cast  
 Concepts upon in plenty as he past,  
 That Naddo might suppose him not to think 235

Entirely on the coming triumph ; wink  
At the one weakness ! 'Twas a fervid child  
That song of his—no brother of the guild  
Had e'er conceived its like. The rest you know ;  
The exaltation and the overthrow ; 240  
Our poet lost his purpose, lost his rank,  
His life—to that it came. Yet envy sank  
Within him, as he heard Sordello out,  
And, for the first time, shouted—tried to shout  
Like others, not from any zeal to show 245  
Pleasure that way : the common sort did so,  
And what was Eglamor ? who, bending down  
The same, placed his beneath Sordello's crown,  
Printed a kiss on his successor's hand,  
Left one great tear on it, then joined his hand 250  
—In time ; for some were watching at the door—  
Who knows what envy may effect ? Give o'er,  
Nor charm his lips, nor craze him ! (here one spied  
And disengaged the withered crown)—Beside  
His crown ? How prompt and clear those verses  
rung 255  
To answer yours ! nay sing them ! And he sung  
Them calmly. Home he went ; friends used to wait  
His coming, anxious to congratulate,  
But, to a man, so quickly runs report,  
Could do no less than leave him, and escort 260  
His rival. That eve, then, bred many a thought  
What must his future life be : was he brought  
So low, who was so lofty this Spring morn ?  
At length he said, Best sleep now with my scorn,  
And by to-morrow I devise some plain 265  
Expedient ! So he slept, nor woke again.  
They found as much, those friends, when they returned  
O'erflowing with the marvels they had learned  
About Sordello's paradise, his roves  
Among the hills and valleys, plains and groves, 270

Wherein, no doubt, this lay was roughly cast,  
 Polished by slow degrees, completed last  
 To Eglamor's discomfiture and death.

Such form 'he chanters now, and, out of breath,  
 They lay the beaten man in his abode, 275  
 Naddo reciting that same luckless ode,  
 Doleful to hear: Sordello could explore  
 By means of it, however, one step more  
 In joy; and, mastering the round at length,  
 Learnt how to live in weakness as in strength, 280  
 When from his covert forth he stood, addressed  
 Eglamor, bade the tender ferns invest,  
 Primæval pines o'er canopy his couch,  
 And, most of all, his fame—(shall I avouch  
 Eglamor heard it, dead though he might look, 285  
 And laughed as from his brow Sordello took  
 The crown, and laid it on his breast, and said,  
 It was a crown, now, fit for poet's head?)

—Continue. Nor the prayer quite fruitless fell;  
 A plant they have yielding a three-leaved bell 290  
 Which whitens at the heart ere noon, and ails  
 Till evening; evening gives it to her gales  
 To clear away with such forgotten things  
 As are an eyesore to the morn: this brings  
 Him to their mind, and bears his very name. 295

So much for Eglamor. My own month came;  
 'Twas a sunrise of blossoming and May.  
 Beneath a flowering laurel thicket lay  
 Sordello; each new sprinkle of white stars  
 That smell fainter of wine than Massic jars 300  
 Dug up at Baize, when the south wind shed  
 The ripest, made him happier; filleted  
 And robed the same, only a lute beside  
 Lay on the turf. Before him far and wide  
 The country stretched: Goito slept behind 305  
 —The castle and its covert which confined

Him with his hopes and fears ; so fain of old  
 To leave the story of his birth untold.  
 At intervals, 'spite the fantastic glow  
 Of his Apollo-life, a certain low 310  
 And wretched whisper winding through the bliss  
 Admonished, no such fortune could be his,  
 All was quite false and sure to fade one day :  
 The closelier drew he round him his array  
 Of brilliance to expel the truth. But when 315  
 A reason for his difference from men  
 Surprised him at the grave, he took no rest  
 While aught of that old life, superbly drest  
 Down to its meanest incident, remained  
 A mystery—alas, they soon explained 320  
 Away Apollo ! and the tale amounts  
 To this : when at Vicenza both her Counts  
 Banished the Vivaresi kith and kin,  
 Those Maltraversi hung on Ecelin,  
 Reviling as he followed ; he for spite 325  
 Must fire their quarter, though that self-same night  
 Among the flames young Ecelin was born  
 Of Adelaide, there too, and barely torn  
 From the roused populace hard on the rear  
 By a poor archer when his chieftain's fear 330  
 Was high ; into the thick Elcorte leapt,  
 Saved her, and died ; no creature left except  
 His child to thank. And when the full escape  
 Was known—how men impaled from chine to nap  
 Unlucky Prata, all to pieces spurned 335  
 Bishop Pistore's concubines, and burned  
 Taurello's entire household, flesh and fell,  
 Missing the sweeter prey—such courage well  
 Might claim reward. The orphan, ever since,  
 Sordello, had been nurtured by his prince 340  
 Within a blind retreat where Adelaide  
 (For, once this notable discovery made,

The past at every point was understood)  
 Can harbour easily when times are rude,  
 When Este schemes for Palma—would retrieve 345  
 That pledge, when Mantua is not fit to leave  
 Longer unguarded with a vigilant eye,  
 Taurello bides there so ambiguously  
 (He who can have no motive now to moil  
 For his own fortunes since their utter spoil) 350  
 As it were worth while yet (goes the report)  
 To disengage himself from us. In short,  
 Apollo vanished; a mean youth, just named  
 His lady's minstrel, was to be proclaimed  
 —How shall I phrase it? Monarch of the World. 355  
 But, on the morning that array was furled  
 For ever, and in place of one a slave  
 To longings, wild, indeed, but longings save  
 In dreams as wild, suppressed—one daring not  
 Assume the mastery such dreams allot, 360  
 Until a magical equipment, strength  
 (Grace, wisdom, decked him too,—he chose at length  
 (Content with unproved wits and failing frame)  
 In virtue of his simple Will, to claim  
 That mastery, no less—to do his best 365  
 With means so limited, and let the rest  
 Go by,—the seal was set: never again  
 Sordello could in his own shot remain  
 One of the many, one with hopes and cares  
 And interests nowise distinct from theirs, 370  
 Only peculiar in a thriveless store  
 Of fancies, which were fancies and no more;  
 Never again for him and for the crowd  
 A common law was challenged and allowed  
 If calmly reasoned of, however denied 375  
 By a mad impulse nothing justified  
 Short of Apollo's presence: the divorce  
 Is clear: why needs Sordello square his course

By any known example? Men no more  
 Compete with him than tree and flower before ; 380  
 Himself, inactive, yet is greater far  
 Than such as act, each stooping to his star,  
 Acquiring thence his function ; he has gained  
 The same result with meaner mortals trained  
 To strength or beauty, moulded to express, 385  
 Each the idea that rules him ; since no less  
 He comprehends that function, but can still  
 Embrace the others, take of Might his fill  
 With Richard as of Grace with Palma, mix  
 Their qualities, or for a moment fix 390  
 On one, abiding free meantime, uncramped  
 By any partial organ, never stamped  
 Strong, so to Strength turning all energies--  
 Wise, and restricted to becoming Wise--  
 That is, he loves not, nor possesses One 395  
 Idea that, star-like over, lures him on  
 To its exclusive purpose. Fortunate  
 This flesh of mine ne'er strove to emulate  
 A soul so various--took no casual mould  
 Of the first fancy and contracted, cold 400  
 Lay clogged forever thence, averse to change  
 As that. Whereas it left her free to range,  
 Remains itself a blank, cast into shade,  
 Encumbers little, if it cannot aid.  
 So, range, my soul ! Who by self-consciousness, 405  
 The last drop of all beauty dost express--  
 The grace of seeing grace, a quintessence  
 For thee : while for the world, that can dispense  
 Wonder on men, themselves that wonder--make  
 A shift to love at second hand and take 410  
 Those for its idols who but idolize,  
 Themselves,—that loves the soul as strong, as wise,  
 Whose love is Strength, is Wisdom,—such shall bow  
 Surely in unexampled worship now,



Discerning me !—

(Dear monarch, I beseech, 415

Notice how lamentably wide a breach

Is here ! discovering this, discover too

What our poor world has possibly to do

With it ! As pigmy natures as you please—

So much the better for you ; take your ease ; 420

Look on, and laugh ; style yourself God alone ;

Strangle some day with a cross olive-stone ;

All that is right enough : but why want us

To know that you yourself know thus and thus ?

Nay finish—)

—Bow to me conceiving all 425

Man's life, who see its blisses, great and small,

Afar—not tasting any ; no machine

To exercise my utmost will is mine,

Therefore mere consciousness for me !—Perceive

What I could do, a mastery believe, 430

Asserted and established to the throng

By their selected evidence of Song

Which now shall prove whate'er they are, or seek

To be, I am—who take no pains to speak,

Change no old standards of perfection, vex 435

With no strange forms created to perplex,

But mean perform their bidding and no more,

At their own satiating-point give o'er,

And each shall love in me the love that leads

His soul to its perfection. Song, not Deeds, 440

(For we get tired) was chosen. Fate would brook

Mankind no other organ ; He would look

For not another channel to dispense

His own volition and receive their sense

Of its existing but would be content, 445

Obstructed else, with merely verse for vent—

Nor should, for instance, Strength an outlet seek

And striving be admired, nor Grace bespeak

Wonder, displayed in gracious attitudes,  
 Nor Wisdom, poured forth, change unseemly moods; 450  
 But he would give and take on Song's one point :  
 Like some huge throbbing-stone that, poised a-joint,  
 Sounds to affect on its basaltic bed  
 Must sue in just one accent : tempests shed  
 Thunder, and raves the landstorm : only let 455  
 That key by any little noise be set—  
 The far benighted hunter's halloo pitch  
 On that, the hungry curlew chance to scritch  
 Or serpent hiss it, rustling through the rift,  
 However loud, however low—all list 460  
 The groaning monster, stricken to the heart.

Lo ye, the world's concernment, for its part,  
 And this, for his, will hardly interfere !  
 Its businesses in blood and blaze this year  
 —But wile the hour away—a pastime slight 465  
 Till he shall step upon the platform : right !  
 And, now thus much is settled, cast in rough,  
 Proved feasible, be counselled ! thought enough,  
 Slumber, Sordello ! any day will serve :  
 Were it a less digested plan ! how swerve 470  
 To-morrow ? Meanwhile eat these sun-dried grapes  
 And watch the soaring hawk there ! Life escapes  
 Merrily thus.

He thoroughly read o'er  
 His truchman Naddo's missive six times more,  
 Praying him visit Mantua and supply 475  
 A famished world.

The evening star was high  
 When he reached Mantua, but his fame arrived  
 Before him : friends applauded, foes connived,  
 And Naddo looked an angel, and the rest  
 Angels, and all these angels would be blest 480  
 Supremely by a song—the thrice-renowned  
 Goito manufacture. Then he found

(Casting about to satisfy the crowd)  
 That happy vehicle, so late allowed,  
 A sore annoyance ; 'twas the song's effect 485  
 He cared for, scarce the song itself : reflect !  
 In the past life what might be singing's use ?  
 Just to delight his Delians, whose profuse  
 Praise, not the toilsome process which procured  
 That praise, enticed Apollo : dreams abjured, 490  
 No over-leaping means for ends—take both  
 For granted or take neither ! I am loth  
 To say the rhymes at last were Eglamor's ;  
 But Naddo, chuckling, bade competitors  
 Go pine ; the Master certes meant to waste 495  
 No effort, cautiously had probed the taste  
 He'd please anon : true bard, in short, disturb  
 His title if they could ; nor spur nor curb,  
 Rancy nor reason, wanting in him ; whence  
 The staple of his verses, common sense : 500  
 He built on Man's broad nature—gift of gifts  
 That power to build ! The world contented shifts  
 With counterfeits enough, a dreary sort  
 Of warriors, statesmen, ere it can extort  
 Its poet-soul—that's, after all, a freak 505  
 (The having eyes to see and tongue to speak)  
 With our herd's stupid sterling happiness  
 So plainly incompatible that—yes—  
 Yes—should a son of his improve the breed  
 And turn out poet, he were cursed indeed. 510  
 Well, there's Goito to retire upon  
 If the worst happen ; best go stoutly on  
 Now ! thought Sordello.

Ay, and goes on yet !

You pother with your glossaries to get  
 A notion of the Troubadour's intent— 515  
 His Rondels, Tenzons, Virlai or Sirvent—  
 Much as you study arras how to twirl

His Angelot, plaything of page and girl  
 Once ; but you surely reach, at last,—or, no !  
 Never quite reach what struck the people so, 520  
 As from the welter of their time he drew  
 Its elements successively to view,  
 Followed all actions backward on their course  
 And catching up, unmingled at the source,  
 Such a Strength, such a Weakness, added then 525  
 A touch or two, and turned them into Men.  
 Virtue took form, nor Vice refused a shape ;  
 Here Heaven opened, there was Hell agape,  
 As Saint this simpered past in sanctity,  
 Sinner the other flared portentous by 530  
 A greedy People : then why stop, surprised  
 At his success ? The scheme was realised  
 Too suddenly in one respect : a crowd  
 Praising, eyes quick to see, and lips as loud  
 To speak, delicious homage to receive, 535  
 Bianca's breath to feel upon his sleeve  
 Who said, " But Anafest—why asks he less  
 Than Lucio, in your verses ? how confess,  
 It seemed too much but yestereve ! " The youth  
 Who bade him earnestly " avow the truth, 540  
 You love Bianca, surely, from your song ;  
 I knew I was unworthy ! " soft or strong,  
 In poured such tributes ere he had arranged  
 Etherial ways to take them, sorted, changed,  
 Digested : courted thus at unawares, 545  
 In spite of his pretensions and his cares  
 He caught himself shamefully hankering  
 After your obvious petty joys that spring  
 From true life, fain relinquish pedestal  
 And condescend with pleasures—one and all 550  
 To be renounced, no doubt ; for thus to chain  
 Himself to single joys and so refrain  
 From tasting their quintessence, frustrates, sure,

His prime design ; each joy must he abjure  
Even for love of it.

He laughed : what sage 555  
But perishes if from his magic page  
He look because, at the first line, a proof  
'Twas heard salutes him from the cavern roof?  
On ! Give thyself, excluding aught beside,  
To the day's task ; compel thy slave provide 560  
Its utmost at the soonest ; turn the leaf  
Thoroughly conned ; these lays of thine, in brief—  
Cannot men bear, now, something better ?—fly  
A pitch beyond this unreal pageantry  
Of essences ? the period sure has ceased 565  
For such : present us with ourselves, at least,  
Not portions of ourselves, mere loves and hates  
Made flesh : wait not !

Awhile the poet waits  
However. The first trial was enough :  
He left imagining, to try the stuff 570  
That held the imaged thing and, let it writhe  
Never so fiercely, scarce allowed a tithe  
To reach the light—his Language. How he sought  
The cause, conceived a cure, and slow re-wrought  
That Language, welding words into the crude 575  
Mass from the new speech round him, till a rude  
Armour was hammered out, in time to be  
Approved beyond the Roman panoply  
Melted to make it, boots not. This obtained  
With some aid, no obstacle remained 580  
To using it ; accordingly he took  
An action with its actors, quite forsook  
Himself to live in each, returned anon  
With the result—a creature, and by one  
And one proceeded leisurely equip 585  
Its limbs in harness of his workmanship.  
Accomplished ! Listen, Mantuans ! Fond essay !

Piece after piece that armour broke away  
 Because perceptions whole, like that he sought  
 To clothe, reject so pure a work of thought 590  
 As language : Thought may take Perception's place  
 But hardly co-exist in any case,  
 Being its mere presentment—of the Whole  
 By Parts, the Simultaneous and the Sole  
 By the Successive and the Many. Lacks 595  
 The crowd perceptions? painfully it tacks  
 Together thoughts Sordello, needing such,  
 Has rent perception into : it's to clutch  
 And reconstruct—his office to diffuse,  
 Destroy : as difficult obtain a Muse 600  
 In sport, as he Apollo. For the rest,  
 E'en if some wondrous vehicle express  
 The whole dream, what impertinence in me  
 So to express it, who myself can be  
 The dream ! nor, on the other hand, are those, 605  
 I sing to over-likely to suppose  
 A higher than the highest I present  
 Now, and they praise already : be content  
 Both parties, rather ; they with the old verse,  
 And I with the old praise—far go, fare worse ! 610  
 A few adhering rivets loosed, upsprings  
 The angel, sparkles off his mail, and rings  
 Whirled from each delicatest limb it warps,  
 As might Apollo from the sudden corpse  
 Of Hyacinth have cast his luckless quoits. 615  
 He set to celebrating the exploits  
 Of Montfort o'er the Mountaineers.

Then came

The world's revenge : their pleasure now his aim  
 Merely—what was it ? Not to play the fool  
 So much as learn our lesson in your school, 620  
 Replied the world : he found that every time  
 He gained applause by any given rhyme

His auditory recognised no jot  
 As he intended, and mistaking not  
 Him for his meanest hero, ne'er was dunce 625  
 Sufficient to believe him—All at once.  
 His Will . . . conceive it caring for his Will !  
 —Mantuans, the main of them, admiring still  
 How a mere singer, ugly, stunted, weak,  
 Had Montfort at completely (so to speak) 630  
 His fingers' ends; while past the praise-tide swept  
 To Montfort, either's share distinctly kept,  
 The true meed for true merit—His abates  
 Into a sort he most repudiates,  
 And on them angrily he turns. Who were 635  
 The Mantuans, after all, that he should care  
 About their recognition, ay or no ?  
 In spite of the convention months ago,  
 (Why blink the truth) was not he forced to help  
 This same ungrateful audience, every whelp 640  
 Of Naddo's litter, make them pass for peers  
 With the bright band of those Goito years,  
 As erst he toiled for flower or tree ? Why there  
 Sat Palma ! Adelaide's funereal hair  
 Ennobled the next corner. Ay, he strewed 645  
 A fairy dust upon that multitude  
 Although he feigned to take them by themselves ;  
 His giants dignified those puny elves,  
 Sublimed their faint applause. In short he found  
 Himself still footing a delusive round, 650  
 Remote as ever from the self-display  
 He meant to compass, hampered every way  
 By what he hoped assistance. Wherefore then  
 Continue, make believe to find in men  
 A use he found not ?

Weeks, months, years went by; 655  
 And, lo, Sordello vanished utterly,  
 Sundered in twain ; each spectral part at strife

With each ; one jarred against another life ;  
 The Poet thwarting hopelessly the Man  
 Who, fooled no longer, free in fancy ran 660  
 Here, there ; let slip no opportunities  
 Forsooth, as pitiful beside the prize  
 To drop on him some no-time and acquit  
 His constant faith (the Poet-half's to wit)  
 That waiving any compromise between 665  
 No joy and all joy kept the hunger keen  
 Beyond most methods—of incurring scoff  
 From the Man-portion not to be put off  
 With self-reflectings by the Poet's scheme  
 Though ne'er so bright ; which sauntered forth in  
 dream, 670  
 Dress'd any how, nor waited mystic frames,  
 Immeasurable gifts, astounding claims,  
 But just his sorry self ; who yet might be  
 Sorrier for aught he in reality  
 Achieved, so pinioned that the Poet-part, 675  
 Fondling, in turn of fancy, Verse ; the Art  
 Developing his soul a thousand ways ;  
 Potent, by its assistance, to amaze  
 The multitude with majesties, convince  
 Each sort of nature that same nature's prince 680  
 Accosted it : language, the makeshift, grew  
 Into a bravest of expedients, too ;  
 Apollo, seemed it now, perverse had thrown  
 Quiver and bow away, the lyre alone  
 Sufficed : while, out of dream, his day's work went 685  
 To tune a crazy tenzon or sirvent—  
 So hampered him the Man-part, thrust to judge  
 Between the hard and the bard's audience, grudge  
 A minute's toil that missed its due reward !  
 But the complete Sordello, Man and Bard, 690  
 John's cloud-girt angel, this foot on the land,  
 That on the sea, with open in his hand



A bitter-sweetling of a book—was gone.  
 And if internal struggles to be one,  
 That frittered him incessantly piece-meal, 695  
 Referred, ne'er so obliquely, to the real  
 Mantuans ! intruding ever with some call  
 To action while he pondered, once for all,  
 Which looked the easier effort—to pursue  
 This course, still leap o'er paltry joys, yearn through 700  
 The present ill-appreciated stage  
 Of self-revelment and compel the age  
 Know him ; or else, forswearing bard-craft, wake  
 From out his lethargy and nobly shake  
 Off timid habits of denial, mix 705  
 With men, enjoy like men : ere he could fix  
 On aught, in rushed the Mantuans ; much they cared  
 For his perplexity ! Thus unprepared,  
 The obvious if not only shelter lay  
 In deeds the dull conventions of his day 710  
 Prescribed the like of him : why not be glad  
 'Tis settled Palma's minstrel, good or bad,  
 Submits to this and that established rule ?  
 Let Vidal change or any other fool  
 His murrey-coloured robe for philamot 715  
 And crop his hair ; so skin-leep, is it not  
 Such vigour ? Then, a sorrow to the heart,  
 His talk ! Whatever topic they might start  
 Had to be groped for in his consciousness  
 Strait, and as strait delivered them by guess : 720  
 Only obliged to ask himself, " What was,"  
 A speedy answer followed, but, alas,  
 One of God's large ones, tardy to condense  
 Itself into a period ; answers whence  
 A tangle of conclusions must be stripp'd 725  
 At any risk ere, trim to pattern ciipp'd,  
 They matched rare specimens the Mantua flock  
 Regaled him with, each talker from his stock

Of sorted o'er opinions, every stage,  
 Juicy in youth or desiccate with age, 730  
 Fruits like the fig-tree's, rathe-ripe, rotten-rich,  
 Sweet-sour, all tastes to take : a practice which  
 He too had not impossibly attained,  
 Once either of those fancy-flights restrained ;  
 For, at conjecture how the words appear 735  
 To others, playing there what passes here,  
 And occupied abroad by what he spurned  
 At home, 'twas slipt the occasion he returned  
 To seize : he'd strike that lyre adroitly--speech,  
 Would but a twenty cubit plectre reach ; 740  
 A clever hand, consummate instrument,  
 Were both brought close ! each excellency went  
 For nothing else. The question Naddo asked  
 Had just a life-time moderately tasked  
 To answer, Naddo's fashion ; more disgust 745  
 And more ; why move his soul, since move it must  
 At minute's notice or as good it failed  
 To move at all ? The end was, he retailed  
 Some ready-made opinion, put to use  
 This quip, that maxim, ventured reproduce 750  
 Gestures and tones—at any folly caught  
 Serving to finish with, nor too much sought  
 If false or true 'twas spoken ; praise and blame  
 Of what he said grew pretty well the same  
 —Meantime awards to meantime acts : his soul, 755  
 Unequal to the compassing a Whole,  
 Saw in a tenth part less and less to strive  
 About. And as for Men in turn . . . contive  
 Who could to take eternal interest  
 In them, so hate the worst, so love the best ! 760  
 Though in pursuance of his passive plan  
 He hailed, decried the proper way.

As Man

So figured he ; and how as Poet ? Verse

Came only not to a stand-still. The worse,  
 That his poor piece of daily work to do 765  
 Was not sink under any rivals; who  
 Loudly and long enough, without these qualms,  
 Tuned, from Boccalini's stark-naked psalms,  
 To Plara's sonnets spoilt by toying with,  
 As knops that stud some almug to the pith 770  
 Prickèd for gum, wry thence, and cinklèd worse  
 Than pursed up eyelids of a river-horse  
 Sunning himself o' the shme when whirrs the breeze  
 Ha, ha! Of course he might compete with these  
 But—but—

Observe a pompion-twine afloat; 775  
 Pluck me one cup from off the castle-moat—  
 Along with cup you raise leaf, stalk and root,  
 The entire surface of the pool to boot.  
 So could I pluck a cup, put in one song  
 A single sight, did not my hand, too strong, 780  
 Twitch in the least the root-strings of the whole.  
 How should externals satisfy my soul?  
 Why that's precise the error Squarcialupe  
 (Hazarded Naddo) finds; the man can't stoop  
 To sing us out, quoth he, a mere romance; 785  
 He'd fain do better than the best, enhance  
 The subjects' rarity, work problems out  
 Therewith: now you're a bard, a bard past doubt,  
 And no philosopher; why introduce  
 Crotchets like these? fine, surely, but no use 790  
 In poetry—which still must be, to strike,  
 Based upon common sense; there's nothing like  
 Appealing to our nature! what beside  
 Was your first poetry? No ticks were tried  
 In that, no hollow thrills, affected throes! 795  
 The man, said we, tells his own joys and woes—  
 We'll trust him. Would you have your songs endure?  
 Build on the human heart!—Why to be sure.

Yours is one sort of heart—but I mean theirs,  
 Ours, every one's, the healthy heart one cares 800  
 To build on! Central peace, mother of strength,  
 That's father of . . . nay, go yourself that length,  
 Ask those calm-hearted doers what they do  
 When they have got their calm! Nay, is it true  
 Fire rankles at the heart of every globe? 805  
 Perhaps! But these are matters one may probe  
 Too deeply for poetic purposes:  
 Rather select a theory that . . . yes  
 Laugh! what does that prove? . . . stations you  
                   midway  
 And saves some little o'er-refining. Nay, 810  
 That's rank injustice done me! I restrict  
 The poet? Don't I hold the poet picked  
 Out of a host of warriors, statesmen—did  
 I tell you? Very like! as well you hid  
 That sense of power you have! True bards believe 815  
 Us able to achieve what they achieve—  
 That is, just nothing—in one point abide  
 Profounder simpletons than all beside:  
 Oh ay! The knowledge that you are a bard  
 Must constitute your prime, nay sole, reward! 820  
 So prattled Naddo, busiest of the tribe  
 Of genius-haunters—how shall I describe  
 What grubs or nips, or rubs, or rips—your louse  
 For love, your flea for hate, magnanimous,  
 Malignant, Pappacoda, Taghater, 825  
 Picking a sustenance from wear and tear  
 By implements it sedulous employs  
 To undertake, lay down, mete out, o'er-toise  
 Sordello? fifty creepers to elude  
 At once! They settled stanchly; shame ensued: 830  
 Behold the monarch of mankind succumb  
 To the last fool who turned him round his thumb,  
 As Naddo styled it! 'Twas not worth oppose

The matter of a moment, gainsay those  
 He aimed at getting rid of; better think 835  
 Their thoughts and speak their speech, secure to slink  
 Back expedition ly to his safe place,  
 And chew the cud—what he and what his race  
 Were really, each of them. Yet even this  
 Conformity was partial. He would miss 840  
 Some point, brought into contact with them ere  
 Assured in what small segment of the sphere  
 Of his existence they attended him;  
 Whence blunders, falsehoods rectify—a grim  
 List—slur it over! How? If dreams were tried, 845  
 His will swayed sickly from side to side  
 Not merely neutralized his waking act  
 But tended c'en in fancy to distract  
 The intermediate will, the choice of means:  
 He lost the art of dreaming: Mantua scenes 850  
 Supplied a baron, say, he sung before,  
 Handsomely reckless, full to running o'er  
 Of gallantries; abjure the soul, content  
 With body, therefore! Scarcely had he bent  
 Himself in dream thus low when matter fast 855  
 Cried out, he found, for spirit to contrast  
 And task it duly; by advances slight,  
 The simple stuff becoming composite,  
 Count Lori grew Apollo—best recall  
 His fancy! Then would some rough peasant-Paul 860  
 Like those old Ecclin confers with, glance  
 His gay apparel o'er; that countenance  
 Gathered his shattered fancy into one,  
 And, body clean abolished, soul alone  
 Sufficed the grey Paulician: by and by 865  
 To balance the ethereality  
 Passions were needed; foiled he sank again.  
 Meanwhile the world rejoiced ('tis time explain)  
 Because a sudden sickness set it free

From Adelaide. Missing the mother-bee 870  
 Her mountain hive Romano swarmed ; at once  
 A rustle-forth of daughters and of sons  
 Blackened the valley. I am sick too, old,  
 Half crazed I think ; what good's the Kaiser's gold  
 To such an one ? God help me ! for I catch 875  
 My children's greedy sparkling eyes at watch—  
 He bears that double breastplate on, they say, ,  
 So many minutes less than yesterday !  
 Beside Monk Hilary is on his knees  
 Now, sworn to kneel and pray till God shall  
 please 880  
 Exact a punishment for many things  
 You know and some you never knew ; which brings  
 To memory, Azzo's sister Beatrix  
 And Richard's Giglia are my Alberic's  
 And Ecelin's betrothed ; the Count himself 885  
 Must get my Palma ; Ghibellin and Guelph  
 Mean to embrace each other. So began  
 Romano's missive to his fighting-man  
 Taurello on the Tuscan's death, away  
 With Friedrich sworn to sail from Naples' bay 890  
 Next month for Syria. Never thunder-clap  
 Out of Vesuvius' mount like this mishap  
 Startled him. That accused Vicenza ! I  
 Absent, and she selects this time to die !  
 Ho, fellows, for Vicenza ! Half a scote 895  
 Of horses ridden dead he stood before  
 Romano in his rocking spurs : too late—  
 Boniface urged me, Este could not wait,  
 The chieftain stammered ; let me die in peace --  
 Forget me ! Was it I e'er craved increase 900  
 Of rule ? Do you and Friedrich plot your worst  
 Against the Father : as you found me first  
 So leave me now. Forgive me ! Palma, sure,  
 Is at Goito still. Retain that lure—

**Only be pacified !**

The country rung 905

With such a piece of news : on every tongue

How Ecelin's great servant, congeed oft,

I had done a long day's service, so might doff

The green and yellow to recover breath

At Mantua, whither, since Retrude's death, 910

(The girlish slip of a Sicilian bride

From Otho's house he carried to reside

At Mantua till the Ferrarese should pile

**A structure worthy her imperial style,**

The gardens raise, their tenantry enshrine 915

(She never lived to see) although his line

Was ancient in her archives and she took

A pride in him, that city, nor forsok

Her child though he forsook himself and spent

A prowess on Romano surely meant 920

For his own purposes—he ne'er resorts

**If wholly satisfied (to trust reports)**

With Ecelin. So, forward in a trice

Were shows to greet him. Take a friend's advice,

Quoth Naddo to Sordello, nor be rash 925

Because your rivals (nothing can abash

Some folks) demur that we pronounced you best

To sound the great man's we come ; 'tis a test,

Remember; Strojavacca looks asquint,

The rough fat sloven; and there's plenty hint 930

**Your pinions have received of late a shock--**

**Out-soar them, cobsman of the silver flock !**

Sing well! A signal wonder song's no whit

**Facilitated.**

### Fast the minutes fit :

Another day, Sordello finds, will bring 935

The soldier, and he cannot choose but sing ;

So quits, a last shift, Mantua—slow, alone:

Out of that aching brain, a very stone,

Song must be struck. What occupies that front?  
 Just how he was more awkward than his wont 940  
 The night before, when Naddo, who had seen  
 Taurello on his progress, praised the mien  
 For dignity no crosses could affect—  
 Such was a joy, and might not he detect  
 A satisfaction if established joys 945  
 Were proved imposture? Poetry annoys  
 Its utmost: wherefore fret? Verses may come  
 Or keep away! And thus he wandered, dumb  
 Till evening, when he paused, thoroughly spent,  
 On a blind hill-top; down the gorge he went, 950  
 Yielding himself up as to an embrace;  
 The moon came out; like features of a face  
 A querulous fraternity of pines,  
 Sad blackthorn clumps, leafless and grovelling vines  
 Also came out, made gradually up 955  
 The picture; 'twas Goito's mountain-cup  
 And castle. He had dropped through one defile  
 He never dared explore, the Chief erewhile  
 Had vanished by. Back rushed the dream, enwrapt  
 Him wholly. 'Twas Apollo now they lapped 960  
 Those mountains, not a pettish minstrel meant  
 To wear his soul away in discontent  
 Brooding on fortune's malice: heart and brain  
 Swelled; he expanded to himself again  
 As that thin seedling spice-tree starved and frail 965  
 Pushing between cat's head or ibis' tail  
 Crusted into the porphyry pavement smooth  
 —Suffered remain just as it sprung to soothe  
 The Soldan's pining daughter, never yet  
 Well in the chilly green-glazed minaret--- 970  
 When rooted up the sunny day she died  
 And flung into the common court beside  
 Its parent tree. Come home, Sordello! Soon  
 Was he low muttering beneath the moon



Of sorrow saved, of quiet evermore, 975  
 How from his purposes maintained before  
 Only resulted wailing and hot tears.  
 Ah, the slim castle I dwindled of late years,  
 But more mysterious ; gone to ruin—trails  
 Of vine thro' every loop-hole. Nought avails 980  
 The night as, torch in hand, he must explore  
 The maple chamber—did I say its floor  
 Was made of intersecting cedar beams?  
 Worn now with gaps so large there blew cold streams  
 Of air quite from the dungeon ; lay your ear 985  
 Close and 'tis like, one after one, you hear  
 In the blind darkness water-drops. The nests  
 And nooks retain their long ranged vesture-chests  
 Empty and smelling of the iris-root  
 The Tuscan grated o'er them to recruit 990  
 Her wasted wits. Palma was gone that day,  
 Said the remaining women. Last, he lay  
 Beside the Carian group reserved and still.  
 The Body, the Machine for Acting Will  
 Had been at the commencement proved unfit ; 995  
 That for Reflecting, Demonstrating it,  
 Mankind—no fitter : was the Will I. self  
 In fault ?

His forehead pressed the moonlit shelf  
 Beside the youngest marble maid awhile ;  
 Then, raising it, he thought, with a long smile, 1000  
 I shall be king again ! as he withdrew  
 The envied scarf ; into the font he threw  
 His crown.

Next day, no poet ! Wherefore ? asked  
 Taurello, when the dance of Jongleurs masked  
 As devils ended ; don't a song come next ? 1005  
 The master of the pageant looked perplex  
 Till Naddo's whisper came to his relief ;  
 His Highness knew what poets were : in brief,

Had not the tetchy race prescriptive right  
To peevishness, caprice? or, call it spite, 1010  
One must receive their nature in its length  
And breadth, expect the weakness with the strength !  
So phrasing, till, his stock of phrases spent,  
The easy-natured soldier smiled assent,  
Settled his portly person, smoothed his chin, 1015  
And nodded that the bull-chase might begin.

## BOOK THE THIRD.

AND the font took them : let our laurels lie !  
 Braid moonfern now with mystic trifoly  
 Because once more Goto gets, once more,  
 Sordello to itself ! A dream is o'er  
 And the suspended life begins anew ; 5  
 Quiet those throbbing temples, then, subdue  
 That cheek's distortion ! Nature's strict embrace,  
 Putting aside the past, shall soon efface  
 Its print as well—factitious humours grown  
 Over the true—loves, hatreds not his own— 10  
 And turn him pure as some forgotten vest  
 Woven of painted byssus, silkiest  
 Tufting the Tyrrhene whelk's pearl-sheeted lip,  
 Left welter where a trireme let it slip  
 I' the sea and vexed a Satrap ; so the stain 15  
 O' the world forsakes Sordello with its pain  
 Its pleasure : how the tinct loosening escapes  
 Cloud after cloud ! Mantua's familiar shapes  
 Die, fair and foul die, fading as they flit,  
 Men, women, and the pathos and the wit, 20  
 Wise speech and foolish, deeds to smile or sigh  
 For, good, bad, seemly or ignoble, die :  
 The last face glances through the eglantines,  
 The last voice murmurs 'twixt the blossomed vines  
 This May of the Machine supplied by Thought 25  
 To compass Self-perception idly sought

By forcing half himself—an insane pulse  
 Of a God's blood on clay it could convulse  
 Never transmute—on human sights and sounds  
 To watch the other half with ; irksome bounds 30  
 It ebbs from to its source, a fountain sealed  
 Forever. Better sure be unrevealed  
 Than part revealed : Sordello well or ill  
 Is finished with : what further use of Will  
 —Point in the prime idea not realised, 35  
 An oversight, inordinately prized  
 No less, and pampered with enough of each  
 Delight to prove the whole above its reach.  
 To need become all natures yet retain  
 The law of one's own nature—to remain 40  
 Oneself, yet yearn . . . aha, that chesnut, think,  
 To yearn for this first larch-bloom crisp and pink,  
 With those pale fragrant tears where zephyrs staunch  
 March wounds along the fretted pine-tree branch !  
 Will and the means to show will, great and small 45  
 Material, spiritual, abjure them all  
 Save any so distinct as to be left  
 Amuse, not tempt become : and, thus hereft,  
 Say, Just as I am fashioned would I be !  
 Nor, Moon, is it Apollo now but me 50  
 Thou visitest to comfort and befriend ;  
 Swim thou into my heart and there an end  
 Since I possess thee ! nay thus shut mine eyes  
 And know, quite know, by that heart's fall and 55  
 If thou dost bury thee in clouds and when  
 Out-standest : wherefore practise upon Men  
 To make that plainer to myself ?

Slide here

Over a sweet and solitary year  
 Wasted : or simply notice change in him—  
 How eyes, bright with exploring once, grew dim 60  
 And satiate with receiving. Some distress

Occasioned, too, a sort of consciousness  
 Under the imbecility ; nought kept  
 That down : he slept, but was aware he slept  
 And frustrate so : as who brainsick made pact 65  
 Erst with the overhanging cataract  
 To deafen him, yet may distinguish now  
 His own blood's measured clicking at his brow.

To finish. One declining Autumn day—  
 Few birds about the heaven chill and grey, 70  
 No wind that cared trouble the tacit woods—  
 He sauntered home complacently, their moods  
 According, his and Nature's. Every spark  
 Of Mantua life was trodden out ; so dark  
 The embers that the Troubadour who sung 75  
 Hundreds of songs forgot, its tricks the tongue,  
 Its craft the brain, how either brought to pass  
 Singing so e'er ; that faculty might class  
 With any of Apollo's now. The year  
 Began to find its early promise sere 80  
 As well. Thus beauty vanishes ! Your stone  
 Outlasts your flesh. Nature's and his youth gone,  
 They left the world to you and wished you joy.  
 When stopping his benevolent employ  
 A presage shuddered through the welkin ; harsh 85  
 The earth's remonstrance followed. 'T was the  
 marsh

Gone of a sudden. Mincio in its place  
 Laughed a broad water in next morning's face  
 And, where the mists broke up immense and white  
 I' the steady wind, burned like a spilt of light 90  
 Out of the crashing of a myriad stars.  
 And here was Nature, bound by the same bars  
 Of fate with him !

No : youth once gone is gone :  
 Deeds let escape are never to be done :  
 Leaf-fall and grass-spring for the year, but us— 95

Oh forfeit I unalterably thus  
 My chance? nor two lives wait me, this to spend  
 Learning save that? Nature has leisure mend  
 Mistake, occasion, knows she will recur -  
 Landslip or seabreach how affects it her 100  
 With her magnificent resources? I  
 Must perish once and perish utterly!  
 Not any stollings now at even-close  
 Down the field-path, Sordello, by thorn rows  
 Alive with lamp-flies, swimming spots of fire 105  
 And dew, outlining the black cypress' spire  
 She waits you at, Flys, who heard you first  
 Woo her the snow-month - ah, but ere she durst  
 Answer 'twas April! - Laden-flower-time-long  
 Her eyes were on the ground; 'tis July, strong 110  
 Now; and because white dust-clouds overwhelm  
 The woodside, here or by the village elm  
 That holds the moon she meets you, somewhat pale,  
 but letting you lift up her coarse flax veil  
 And whisper (the damp little hand in yours) 115  
 Of love—heart's love—your heart's love that endures  
 Till death. Tush! No mad mixing with the rout  
 Of haggard rihalds wandering about  
 The hot torchlit wine-scented island-house  
 Where Friedrich holds his wickedest carouse 120  
 Parading to the gay Palermians,  
 Soft Messinese, dusk Saracenic clans  
 From Nuocera, those tall grave dazzling Norse,  
 Clear-checked, lank-haired, toothed whiter than the  
 morse,  
 Queens of the caves of jet stalactites 125  
 He sent his barks to fetch through icy seas,  
 The blind night seas without a saving-star,  
 And here in snowy birdskin robes they are,  
 Sordello, here, mollitious alcoves gilt  
 Superb as Byzant-domes that devils built 130

--Ah, Byzant, there again ! no chance to go  
 Ever like august pleasant Dandolo,  
 Worshipping hearts about him for a wall,  
 Conducted, blind eyes, hundred years and all,  
 Through vanquished Byzant to have noted him 135  
 What pillar, marble massive, sardius slim,  
 'Twere fittest we transport to Venice' Square—  
 Flattered and promised life to touch them there  
 Soon, by his fervid sons of senators !  
 No more lifes, deaths, loves, hatreds, peaces,  
 wars— 140

Ah, fragments of a Whole ordained to be !  
 Points in the life I waited ! what are ye  
 But roundels of a ladder which appeared  
 Awhile the very platform it was reared  
 To lift me on—that Happiness I find 145  
 Proofs of my faith in, even in the blind  
 Instinct which bade forego you all unless  
 Ye led me past yourselves? Ay, Happiness  
 Awaited me ; the way life should be used  
 Was to acquire, and deeds like you conducted 150  
 To teach it by a self-revelment (deemed  
 That very use too long). Whatever seemed  
 Progress to that was Pleasure ; aught that stayed  
 My reaching it—No Pleasure. I have 'tid  
 The roundels down ; I climb not ; still aloft 155  
 The platform stretches ! Bliss strong and soft  
 I dared not entertain elude me ; yet  
 Never of what they promised could I get  
 A glimpse till now ! The common sort, the crowd,  
 Exist, perceive ; with Being are endowed, 160  
 However slight, distinct from what they See,  
 However bounded : Happiness must be  
 To feed the first by gleanings from the last,  
 Attain its qualities, and slow or fast  
 Become what they behold ; such peace-in-strife 165

By transmutation is the Use of Life,  
 The Alien turning Native to the soul  
 Or body—which instructs me ; I am whole  
 There and demand a Palma ; had the world  
 Been from my soul to a like distance hurled 170  
 'Twere Happiness to make it one with me—  
 Whereas I must, ere I begin to Be,  
 Include a world, in flesh, I comprehend  
 In spirit now ; and this done, what's to blend  
 With ? Nought is Alien here—my Will 175  
 Owns all already ; yet can turn it still  
 Less Native, since my Means to correspond  
 With Will are so unworthy 'twas my bond  
 To tread the very ones that tantalize  
 Me now into a grave, never to rise— 180  
 I die then ! Will the rest agree to die ?  
 Next Age or no ? Shall its Sordello try  
 Clue after clue and catch at last the clue  
 I miss, that's underneath my finger too,  
 Twice, thrice a day, perhaps,—some yearning traced 185  
 Deeper, some petty consequence embraced  
 Closer ! Why fled I Mantua then ? Complained  
 So much my Will was fettered, yet remained  
 Content within a tether half the range  
 I could assign it ?—able to exchange 190  
 My ignorance, I felt, for knowledge, and  
 Idle because I could thus understand—  
 Could e'en have penetrated to its core  
 Our mortal mystery, and yet forbore,  
 Preferred elaborating in the dark 195  
 My casual stuff, by any wretched spark  
 Born of my predecessors, tho' one stroke  
 Of mine had brought the flame forth ! Mantua's yoke,  
 My minstrel's-trade, was to behold mankind,  
 And my own matter just to bring my mind 200  
 Behold, just extricate, for my acquist,



Each object suffered stifle in the mist  
 Convention, hazard, blindness could impose  
 In their relation to myself.

He rose.

The level winn carried above the firs 205  
 Clouds, the irrevocable travellers,  
 Onward.

Pushed thus into a drowsy copse,  
 Arms twine about my neck, each eyelid drops  
 Under a humid finger; while there fleets  
 Outside the screen a pageant time repeats 210  
 Never again! To be deposed—immured  
 Clandestinely—still petted, still assured  
 To govern were fatiguing work—the Sight  
 Fleeting meanwhile! 'Tis noontide—wreak ere night  
 Somehow one's will upon it rather! Slake 215  
 Thus thirst somehow, the poorest impress take  
 That serves! A blasted bud displays you, toin,  
 Faint rudiments of the full flower unborn;  
 But who divines what petal coats o'erclasp  
 Of the bulb dormant in the Mummy's grasp 220  
 Taurello sent . . .

Taurello? Palma sent

Your Troaver, (Naddo interposing leant  
 Over the lost bard's shoulder) and believe,  
 You cannot more reluctantly conceive  
 Than I pronounce her message: we depart 225  
 Together: what avail a poet's heart  
 Verona and her gauds? five blades of grass  
 Suffice him. News? Why, where your marsh was,  
 On its mud-banks smoke rises after smoke  
 If the valley like a spout of hell new-broke. 230  
 Oh, the world's tidings! little thanks, I guess,  
 For them. The father of our Patroness  
 Playing Taurello an astounding trick  
 Parts between Ecclin and Alberic

His wealth and goes into a convent : both 235  
 Wed Guelfs : the Count and Palma plighted troth  
 A week since at Verona : and she wants  
 You doubtless to contrive the marriage-chants  
 Erè Richard storms Ferrara. Your response  
 To Palma? Wherefore jest? Depart at once? 240  
 A good resolve ! In truth I hardly hoped  
 So prompt an acquiescence. Have you groped  
 Out wisdom in the wilds here?—Thoughts may be  
 Over-poetical for poetry?  
 Pearl-white you minstrels liken Palma's neck, 245  
 And yet what spoils an orient like some speck  
 Of genuine white turning its own white grey?  
 You take me? Curse the cicales !

One more day—

One eve—appears Verona ! Many a group,  
 (You mind) instructed of the osprey's swoop 250  
 On lynx and ounce, was gathering—Christendom  
 Sure to receive, whate'er it might be, from  
 The evening's purpose cheer or detriment  
 Since Friedrich only waited some event  
 Like this of Chibellins establishing 255  
 Themselves within Ferrara, ere, as King  
 Of Lombardy, he'd glad descend there, wage  
 Old warfare with the Pontiff, disengage  
 His barons from the burghiers, and restore  
 The rule of Charlemagne broken of yore 260  
 By Hildebrand. That eve-long each by each  
 Sordello sate and Palma : little speech  
 At first in that dim closet, face with face  
 Despite the tumult in the market place  
 Exchanging quick low laughter : now would gush 265  
 Word upon word to meet a sudden flush,  
 A look left off, a shifting lips' surmise—  
 But for the most part their two histories  
 Ran best thro' the locked fingers and linked arms.

And so the night flew on with its alarms 270  
 Till in burst one of Palma's retinue ;  
 Now, Lady, gasped he. Then arose the two  
 And leaned into Verona's air dead still.  
 A balcony my black beneath until  
 Out 'mid a gush of torchfire, grey-haired men 275  
 Came on it and harangued the people : then  
 Sea-like that people surging to and fro  
 Shouted, Hail forth the Carroch—trumpets, ho,  
 A flourish ! run it in the ancient grooves—  
 Back from the bell ! Hammer ! that whom behooves 280  
 May hear the League is up ! Peal ! learn who list,  
 Verona means not be the first break tryst  
 To-morrow with the League.

Enough. Now turn—  
 Over the Eastern cypresses : discern  
 Is any beacon set a-glimmer ?  
 Rang 285  
 The air with shout, that overpowered the clang  
 Of the incessant carroch even. Haste—  
 The Candle's at the gate-way ! ere it waste  
 Each soldier stands beside, aimed fit to march  
 With Trio Sanpiero through that Eastern arch ! 290  
 Ferrara's succoured, Palma !

Once again  
 They sat together ; some strange thing in train  
 To say, so difficult was Palma's place  
 In taking, with a coy fastidious grace  
 Like the l'rd's flutter ere it fix and feed : 295  
 But when she felt she held her friend indeed  
 Safe, she threw back her curls, began implant  
 Her lessons ; telling of another want  
 Goito's quiet nourished than his own ;  
 Palma—to serve, as him—be served, alone 300  
 Importing ; Agnes' milk so neutralised  
 The blood of Eccln. Nor be surprised

If, while Sordello nature captive led,  
 In dream was Palma wholly subjected  
 'To some out-soul which dawned not though she  
     pined 305  
 Delaying still (pursued she) heart and mind  
 To live : how dared I let expand the force  
 Within me till some out-soul whose resource  
 It grew for should direct it ? Every law  
 Of life, its fitnesses and every flaw, 310  
 Must that determine whose corporal shape  
 Would be no other than the prime escape  
 And revelation to me of a Will  
 Orb-like o'ershrouded and inscrutable  
 Above except the point I was to know 315  
 Shone that myself, my powers, might overflow  
 So far, so much ; as now it signified  
 Which earthly shape it henceforth chose to guide  
 Me by whose lip selected to declare  
 Its oracles, what fleshly garb would wear : 320  
 —The first of intimations, whom to love ;  
 The next, how love him. And that orb above  
 The castle-covert and the mountain-close  
 Slow in appearing, if beneath arose  
 Cravings, aversions, and our green precinct 325  
 Take pride in me at unawares distinct  
 With this or that endowment, how repress  
 At once such jetting power shrank to the rest !  
 Was I to have a chance touch spoil me, leave  
 My spirit thence unfitted to receive 330  
 The consummating spell ?—that spell so near  
 Moreover : waits he not the waking year ?  
 His almond-blossoms must be honey-ripe  
 By this ; to welcome him fresh runnels stripe  
 The thawed ravines ; because of him the wind 335  
 Walks like a herald. I shall surely find  
 Him now !

And chief that earnest April morn  
 Of Richard's Love-court was it time, so worn  
 And white her cheek, so idly her blood beat,  
 Sitting that morn beside the Lady's feet 340  
 And saying : she prompted ; till outburst  
 One face from all the faces—not then first  
 She knew it ; where in maple-chamber glooms,  
 Crowned with what sanguine-heart pomegranate blooms  
 Advanced it ever ? Men's acknowledgment 345  
 Sanctioned her own : 'twas taken, Palma's bent,  
 She said.

And day by day the Tuscan dumb  
 Sat scheming, scheming ; Ecclin would come  
 Gaunt, scared, Cesano baffles me, he'd say :  
 Better I fought it out my father's way ! 350  
 Strangle Feirara in its drowning flats  
 And you and your 'Taurello yonder—what's  
 Romano's business there ? An hour's concern  
 To cure the froward Chief !—induced return  
 Much heartened from those overmeaning eyes, 355  
 Wound up to persevere, his enterprise  
 Marked out anew, its exigent of wit  
 Apportioned, she at liberty to sit  
 And scheme against the next emergence, I—  
 To covet what I deemed their sprite, man fly 360  
 Or fold the wing—to con your horoscope  
 For leave command those stately shafts shoot ope  
 Or straight assuage their blinding eagerness  
 To blank smooth snow : what semblance of success  
 To any of my plans for making you 365  
 Romano's lord ? That chief—her children too—  
 There Salinguerra would obstruct me sheer,  
 And the insuperable Tuscan here  
 Stayed me ! But one wild eve that Lady died  
 In her lone chamber : only I beside : 370  
 Taurello far at Naples, and my sire

At Padua, Ecelin away in ire  
 With Alberic : she held me thus—a clutch  
 To make our spirits as our bodies touch—  
 And so began flinging the past up, heaps 375  
 Of uncouth treasure from their sunless sleeps  
 Within her soul ; deeds rose along with dreams,  
 Fragments of many miserable schemes,  
 Secrets, more secrets, then—no, not the last—  
 'Mongst others, like a casual trick o' the past, 380  
 How . . . ay, she told me, gathering her face  
 That face of hers into one arch-grimace  
 To die with . . .

Friend, 'tis gone ! but not the fear  
 Of that fell laughing, heard as now I hear.  
 Nor faltered voice, nor seemed her heart grow 385  
 weak,  
 When i' the midst abrupt she ceased to speak  
 --Dead, as to serve a purpose, mark, for in  
 Jushed o' the very instant Ecelin  
 (How summoned who divines ?) looking as if  
 Part understood he why his mate lay stiff 390  
 Already in my arms, for, Girl, how must,  
 I manage Este in the matter thrust  
 Upon me, how unravel their bad coil?  
 Since (he declared) 'tis on your brow—a coil  
 Like hers there ! then said in a breath he lacked 395  
 No counsel after all, had signed no part  
 With devils, nor was treason here or there,  
 Goito or Vicenza, his affair:  
 He'd bury it in Adelaide's deep grave  
 And begin life afresh, nor, either, slave 400  
 For any Friedrich's or Taurello's sake !  
 What bootéd him to meddle or to make  
 In Lombardy ? 'Twas afterward I knew  
 The meaning of his promise to undo  
 All she had done—why marriages were made, 405

New friendships entered on, old followers paid  
 With curses for their pains, people's amaze  
 At height, when, passing out by Gate St. Blaise  
 He stopped short in Vicenza, bent his head  
 Over a friar's neck, had vowed, he said, 410  
 Long since, nigh thirty years, because his wife  
 And child were saved there, to bestow his life  
 On God, his gettings on the Church.

Exiled

Within Goito, still that dream beguiled  
 Her days and nights; 'twas found the orb she  
 sought 415  
 To serve, those glimpses came of Fomalhaut  
 No other: how then serve it?—authorise  
 Him and Romano mingle destinies?  
 And straight Romano's angel stood beside  
 Her who had else been Boniface's bride, 420  
 For Salinguerra 'twas, the neck low bent,  
 And voice lightened to music as he meant  
 To learn not teach me how Romano waxed,  
 Wherefore it waned and why if I relaxed  
 My grasp (thinks I 'd) would drop a thing effete, 425  
 Frayed by itself, unequal to complete  
 The course and counting every step astray  
 A gain so much. Romano every way  
 Stable, a House now—why this starting back  
 Into the very outset of its track? 430  
 This recent patching-principle allied  
 Our House with other Houses—what beside  
 Concerned the apparition, yon grim Knight  
 Who followed Conrad hither in such plight  
 His utmost wealth was reckoned in his steed? 435  
 For Ecelo, that prowler, was decreed  
 A task in the beginning hazardous  
 To him as ever task can be to us,  
 But did the weather-beaten thief despair

When first our crystal cincture of warm air, 440  
 That binds the Trivisan as its spice-belt  
 (Crusaders say) the tract where Jesus dwelt,  
 Furtive he pierced and Este was to face—  
 Despaired Saponian Strength of Lombard Grace?  
 Said he for making surer aught made sure, 445  
 Maturing what already was mature?  
 No; his heart prompted Eccelo, Confront  
 Este, inspect yourself. What's nature? Wont  
 Discard three-parts your nature and adopt  
 The rest as an advantage! Old Strength propped 450  
 The earliest of Podestas among  
 The Vincentines, no less than, while there sprung  
 His Palace up in l'adua like a threat,  
 Their noblest spied a Grace unnoticed yet  
 In Conrad's crew. Thus far the object gained, 455  
 Romano was established; has remained -  
 For are you not Italian, truly peer  
 With Este? *Azzo* better soothes it ear\*  
 Than Alberic? or is this lion's-crine  
 From over-mount (this yellow hair of mine) 460  
 So weak a graft on Agnes Este's stock?  
 (Thus went he on with something of a mock)  
 Wherefore recoil then from the very fate  
 Conceded you, refuse to imitate  
 Your model farther? Este long since left 465  
 Being mere Este: as a blade its hilt,  
 Este requires the Pope to further him:  
 And you, the Kaiser: whom your father's whim  
 Foregoes or, better, never shall forego  
 If Palma dares pursue what Eccelo 470  
 Commenced but Eccelin desists from: just  
 As Adelaide of Susa could intrust  
 Her donative (that's Piedmont to the Pope,  
 The Alpine-pass for him to shut or ope

\* [Sic.]



'Twixt France and Italy) to the superb  
 Matilda's perfecting,—lest aught disturb  
 Our Adelaide's great counter-project for  
 Giving her Trentine to the Emperor  
 With pas age here from Germany, shall you  
 Take it, my slender plodding talent, too—  
 Urged me Taurello with his half-smile.

He

As Patron of the scattered family  
 Conveyed me to his Mantua, kept in bruit  
 Azzo's alliances and Richard's suit  
 Until, the Kaiser excommunicate,  
 Nothing remains, Taurello said, but wait  
 Some rash procedure: Palma was the link,  
 As Agnes' child, between us, and they shrink  
 From losing Palma: judge if we advance  
 Your father's method your inheritance!  
 The day she was betrothed to Boniface  
 At Padua by Taurello's self, took place  
 The outrage of the Veronese: again,  
 That day she sought Verona with the train  
 Agreed for, by Taurello's policy  
 Convicting Richard of the fault, since she  
 Were present to annul or to confirm,  
 Richard, whose patience had outlasted its term,  
 Quitted Verona for the edge.

And now

What glory may engird Sordello's brow  
 For this? A month since Oliero sunk  
 All Ecelin that was into a Monk;  
 But how could Salinguerra so forget  
 His liege of thirty summers as grudge yet  
 One effort to recover him? He sent  
 Forthwith the tidings of the Town's event  
 To Oliero, adding, he, despite  
 The recent folly, recognised his right

To order such proceedings : should he wring  
 Its uttermost advantage out, or fling 510  
 This chance away? If not him, who was I head  
 Now of the House? Through me that missive sped ;  
 My father's answer will by me return.  
 Behold ! For him, he writes, no more concern  
 With strife than for his children with the plots 515  
 Of Friedrich. Old engagements out he blots  
 For aye : Taurello shall no more subseive,  
 Nor Ecclin impose ! Lest this unnerve  
 Him therefore at this juncture, slack his grip  
 Of Richard, suffer the occasion slip, 520  
 I, in his sons' default (who, mating with  
 Este, forsake Romano as the frith  
 Its mainsea for the firmland that makes head  
 Against) I stand, Romano ; in their stead  
 Assume the station they desert, and give 525  
 Still, as the Kaiser's Representative,  
 Taurello licence he demands. Midnight—  
 Morning—by noon to-morrow, making light  
 Of the League's issue, we, in some gay weed  
 Like yours disguised together, may precede 530  
 The arbitrators to Ferrara ; teach  
 Him, let Taurello's noble accents teach  
 The rest ! then say if I have misconceived  
 Your destiny, too readily believed  
 The Kaiser's cause your own !

And Palma's flail. 535

Though no affirmative disturbs the head  
 A dying lamp-flame sinks and rises o'er  
 Like the alighted planet Pollux wore,  
 Until, morn breaking, he resolves to be  
 Gate-vein of this heart's blood of Lombardy, 540  
 Soul to their body—have their aggregate  
 Of souls and bodies, and so conquer fate  
 Though he should live, a centre of disgust

Even, apart, core of the outward crust  
 He vivifies, assimilates. For thus 545  
 Bring I Sordello to the rapturous  
 Exclaim at the crowd's cry, because one round  
 Of life was quite accomplished and he found  
 Not only that a soul, howe'er its might,  
 Is insufficient to its own delight, 550  
 Both in corporeal organs and in skill  
 By means of such to body forth its Will—  
 And, after, insufficient to apprise  
 Men of that Will, oblige them recognise  
 The Hid by the Revealed—but that,—the last 555  
 Nor lightest of the struggles overpast,  
 His Will, bade abdicate, which would not void  
 The throne, might sit there, suffer he enjoyed  
 The same a varied and divine array  
 Incapable of homage the first way 560  
 Nor fit to render incidentally  
 Tribute connived at, taken by the by,  
 In joys: and if, thus warranted rescind  
 The ignominious exile of mankind  
 Whose proper service, ascertained intact 565  
 As yet (by Him to be themselves made act,  
 Not watch Sordello acting each of them)  
 Was to secure—if the true diadem  
 Seemed imminent while our Sordello drank  
 The wisdom of that golden l'alma, thank 570  
 Verona's Lady in her Citadel  
 Founded by Gaulish Brennus legends tell—  
 And truly when she left him the sun reared  
 A head like the first clamberer's that peered  
 A-top the Capitol, his face on flame 575  
 With triumph, triumphing till Manlius came.  
 Nor slight too much my rhymes—"that spring, dispread,  
 Dispart, disperse, lingering overhead  
 Like an escape of angels!" Rather say

My transcendental platan ! mounting gay 580  
 (An archimage so courts a novice-queen)  
 With tremulous silvered trunk, whence branches sheen  
 Laugh out, thick-foliaged next, a-shiver soon  
 With coloured buds, then glowing like the moon  
 One mild flame, last a pause, a burst, and all 585  
 Her ivory limbs are smothered by a fall,  
 Bloom-flinders and fruit-sparkles and leaf-dust,  
 Ending the weird work prosecuted just  
 For her amusement ; he decrepit, stark,  
 Dozes ; her uncontrolled delight may mark 590  
 Apart—

Yet not so, surely never so !  
 Only as good my soul were suffered go  
 O'er the lagune : forth fare thee, put aside  
 Entrance thy synod, as a God may glide  
 Out of the world he fills and leave it mute 595  
 A myriad ages as we men compute,  
 Returning into it without a break  
 I' the consciousness ! They sleep, and I awake  
 O'er the lagune.

Sordello said once, note  
 In just such songs as Eglamor, say, wrote 600  
 With heart and soul and strength, for he believed  
 Himself achieving all to be achieved  
 By singer—in such songs you find alone  
 Completeness, judge the song and singer One  
 And either's purpose answered, his in it 605  
 Or its in him : while from true works (to wit  
 Sordello's dream-performances that will  
 Be never more than dream) escapes there still  
 Some proof the singer's proper life's beneath  
 The life his song exhibits, this a sheath 610  
 To that ; a passion and a knowledge far  
 Transcending these, majestic as they are,  
 Smoulder ; his lay was but an episode

In the bard's life. Which evidence you owed  
 To some slight weariness, a looking off \* 615  
 O, start away, the childish skit or scoff  
 In "Charlemagne," for instance, dreamed divine  
 In every point except one restive line  
 Those daughters!—what significance may lurk  
 In that? My life commenced before that work, 620  
 Continues after it, as on I fare  
 With no more stopping possibly, no care  
 To jot down (says the bard) the why and how  
 And where and when of life, as I do now :  
 But shall I cease to live for that? Alas 625  
 For you! who sigh, when shall it come to pass  
 We read that story, when will he compress  
 The future years, his whole life's business,  
 Into another lay which that one flout,  
 Howe'er inopportune it be, lets out 630  
 Engrosses him already while professed  
 To meditate with us eternal rest?  
 Strike sail, slip cable! here the galley's moored  
 For once, the awning's stretched, the poles assured;  
 Noontide above; except the wave's crisp dash, 635  
 Or buzz of colibri, or tortoise' splash,  
 The margin's silent; out with every spoil  
 Made in our tracking, coil by mighty coil,  
 This serpent of a river to his head  
 In the midst! Admire each treasure as we spread 640  
 The turf to help us tell our history  
 Aright: give ear then, gentles, and descry  
 The groves of giant rushes how they grew  
 Like demons' endlong tresses we sailed through,  
 What mountains yawned, forests to give us vent 645  
 Opened, each doleful side, yet on we went  
 Till . . . may that berte (shake your cap) attest  
 The springing of a land-wind from the West!  
 Wherefore? Ah yes, you frolic it to-day:

To-morrow, and the pageant's moved away 650  
 Down to the poorest tent-pole : we and you  
 Part company : no other may pursue  
 Eastward your voyage, be informed what fate  
 Intends, if triumph or decline await  
 The tempter of the everlasting steppe. 655

I sung this on an empty palace-step  
 At Venice : why should I break off, nor sit  
 Longer upon my step, exhaust the fit  
 England gave birth to ? Who's adorable  
 Enough reclaim a ——— no Sordello's Will 660  
 Alack !—be queen to me ? That Bassanese  
 Busied among her smoking fruit-boats ? These  
 Perhaps from our delicious Asolo  
 Who twinkle, pigeons o'er the portico  
 Not prettier, bind late lilies into sheaves 665  
 To deck the bridge-side chapel, dropping leaves  
 Soiled by their own loose gold-meal ? Ah, beneath  
 The cool arch stoops she, brownest-cheek ! Her  
 wreath

Endures a month—a half-month—if I make  
 A queen of her, continue for her sake 670  
 Sordello's story ? Nay, that l'aduan girl  
 Splashes with barer legs where a live whirl  
 In the dead black Giudecca proves sea-weed  
 Drifting has sucked down three, four, all indeed  
 Save one pale-red striped, pale-blue turbaned post 675  
 For gondolas.

You sad disheveled ghost  
 That pluck at me and point, are you advised  
 I breathe ? Let stay those girls (e'en her disguised  
 —Jewels in the locks that love no crownnet like  
 Their native field-buds and the green wheat spike, 680  
 So fair !—Who left this end of June's turmoil,  
 Shook off, as might a lily its gold soil,  
 Pomp, save a foolish gem or two, and free

Came join the peasants o'er the kissing sea.)  
 Look they too happy, too tricked out? Confess 685  
 You have so niggard stock of happiness  
 To share that, do one's uttermost, dear wretch,  
 One labour: ineffectually stretch  
 It o'er you so that mother, children, both  
 May equitably flaunt the sumpter-cloth! 690  
 No: tear the robe yet farther: be content  
 With seeing some few score pre-eminent  
 Through shreds of it, acknowledged happy wights,  
 Engrossing what should furnish all, by rights—  
 (At home we dizen scholars, chiefs and kings, 695  
 But in this magic weather hardly clings  
 The old garb gracefully: Venice a type  
 Of Life, 'twixt blue and blue extends, a stripe,  
 As Life, the somewhat, hangs 'twixt nought and  
 nought:  
 'Tis Venice, and 'tis Life—as good you sought 700  
 To spare me the Piazza's slippery stone  
 Or stay me thrid her cross canals alone,  
 As hinder Life what seems the single good  
 Sole purpose, one thing to be understood  
 Of Life)—best, be they Peasants, be they Queens, 705  
 Take them, I say made happy any means,  
 Parade them for the common credit, with  
 A luckless residue we send to crouch  
 In corners out of sight was just as framed  
 For happiness, its portion might have claimed 710  
 And so, could we concede, that portion, stalked  
 Fastuous as any—such my project, baulked  
 Already; hardly venture I adjust  
 A lappet when I find you! To mistrust  
 Me! nor unreasonably. You, no doubt, 715  
 Have the true knack of tiring suitors out  
 With those thin lips on tremble, lashless eyes  
 Inveterately tear-shot—there, be wise

Mistress of mine, there, there, as if I meant  
 You insult ! Shall your friend (not slave) be silent 720  
 For speaking home? Beside care-bit crased  
 Broken-up beauties ever took my taste  
 Supremely, and I love you more, far more  
 That her I looked should foot Life's temple-floor—  
 Years ago, leagues at distance, when and where 725  
 A whisper came, Seek others, since thy care  
 Is found, thy life's provision ; if a race  
 Should be thy mistress, and into one face  
 The many faces crowd? Ah, had I, judge,  
 Or no, your secret? Rough apparel—grudge 730  
 All ornaments save tag or tassel worn  
 To hint we are not thoroughly forlorn —  
 Slouch bonnet, unloop mantle, careless go  
 Alone (that's saddest but it must be so)  
 Through Venice, sing now and now glance aside, 735  
 Aught desultory or undignified,  
 And, ravishingest lady, will you pass  
 Or not each formidable group, the mass  
 Before the Basilike (that feast gone by,  
 God's day, the great June Corpus Domini) 740  
 And wistfully foregoing proper men,  
 Come timid up to me for alms? And then  
 The luxury to hesitate, feign do  
 Some unexampled grace, when whom but you  
 Dare I bestow your own upon? And hear 745  
 Me out before you say it is to sneer  
 I call you ravishing, for I regret  
 Little that she, whose early foot was set  
 Forth as she'd plant it on a pedestal,  
 Now i' the silent city, seems to fall 750  
 Towards me—no wreath, only a lip's unrest  
 To quiet, surcharged eyelids to be pressed  
 Dry of their tears upon my bosom : strange  
 Such sad chance should produce in thee such change,



My love! warped men, souls, bodies! yet God spoke 755  
 Of right-hand foot and eye—selects our yoke,  
 Sordello! as your poetship may find:  
 So sleep upon my shoulder, child, nor mind  
 Their foolish talk; we'll manage reinstate  
 The matter; ask moreover, when they prate 760  
 Of evil men past hope, don't each contrive  
 Despite the evil you abuse to live?  
 Keeping, each losel, thro' a maze of lies,  
 His own conceit of truth? to which he hies  
 By obscure tortuous windings, if you will, 765  
 But to himself not inaccessible;  
 He sees it, and his lies are for the crowd  
 Who cannot see; some fancied right-allowed  
 His vilest wrong, empowered the fellow clutch  
 One pleasure from the multitude of such 770  
 Denied him: then assert, all men appear  
 To think all better than themselves, by here  
 Trusting a crowd they wrong; but really, say,  
 All men think all men stupider than they  
 Since save themselves no other comprehends 775  
 The complicated scheme to make amends  
 —Evil, the scheme by which, thro' Ignorance  
 Good labours to exist. A slight advance  
 Merely to find the sickness you die through  
 And nought beside: but if one can't eschew 780  
 One's portion in the common lot, at least  
 One can avoid an ignorance increased  
 Tenfold by dealing out hint after hint  
 How nought is like dispensing without stint  
 The water of life—so easy to dispense 785  
 Beside, when one has probed the centre whence  
 Commotion's born—could tell you of it all  
 —Meantime, just meditate my madrigal  
 O' the mugwort that conceals a dewdrop safe!  
 What, dullard? we and you in smothery chafe 790

- Babes, baldheads, stumbled thus far into Zin  
 The Horrid, getting neither out nor in,  
 A hungry sun above us, sands among  
 Our throats, each dromedary lolls a tongue,  
 Each camel churns a sick and frothy chap, 795  
 And you, 'twixt tales of Potiphar's mishap  
 And sonnets on the earliest ass that spoke,  
 Remark, you wonder any one needs choke  
 With founts about ! Potsherd him, Gibconites,  
 While awkwardly enough your Moses smites 800  
 The rock though he forego his Promised Land,  
 Thereby, have Satan claim his carcass, and  
 Dance, forsooth, Metaphysic Poet . . . ah  
 Mark ye the dim first oozings ? Meribah !  
 And quaffing at the fount my courage gained 805  
 Recall—not that I prompt ye—who explained . . .  
 Presumptuous ! interrupts one. You not I  
 'Tis Brother, marvel at and magnify  
 Mine office : office, quotha ? can we get  
 To the beginning of the office yet ? 810  
 What do we here ? simply experiment  
 Each on the other's power and its intent  
 When elsewhere tasked, if this of mine were trucked  
 For Thine to either's profit,— watch construct,  
 In short, an engine : with a finished one 815  
 What it can do is all, nought how 'tis done ;  
 But this of ours yet in probation, dusk  
 A kernel of strange wheelwork thro' its husk  
 Grows into shape by quarters and by halves ;  
 Remark this tooth's spring, wonder what that valve's 820  
 Fall bodes, presume each faculty's device,  
 Make out each other more or less precise—  
 The scope of the whole engine's to be proved—  
 We die : which means to say the whole's removed,  
 Dismounted wheel by wheel that complex gin 825  
 To be set up anew elsewhere, begin

A task indeed but with a clearer clime  
 Than the murky lodgment of our building-time :  
 And then, I grant you, it behoves forget  
 How 'tis done—all that must amuse us yet 830  
 So long : and while thou turnest on thy heel  
 Pray that I be not busy slitting steel  
 Or shredding brass upon a virgin shore  
 Under a cluster of fresh stars, before  
 I name a tithe the wheels I trust to do ! 835  
 So occupied, then, are we . hitherto,  
 At present, and a weary while to come,  
 The office of ourselves nor blind nor dumb  
 And seeing somewhat of man's state, has been,  
 The worst of us, to say they so have seen ; 840  
 The better, what it was they saw ; the best,  
 Impart the gift of seeing to the rest :  
 So that I glance, says such an one, around,  
 And there's no face but I can read profound  
 Disclosures in ; this stands for hope, that—fear, 845  
 And for a speech, a deed in proof, look here !  
 Stoop, else the strings of blossom, where the nuts  
 O'erarch, will blind thee ! said I not ? she shuts  
 Both eyes this time, so close the hazels meet !  
 Thus, prisoned in the Pionibi, I repeat 850  
 Events one rove occasions, o'er and o'er,  
 Putting 'twixt me and madness evermore  
 Thy sweet shape, Elys ! therefore stoop—  
 That's truth !

(Applaud you) the incarcerated youth  
 Would say that !

Youth ? Plara the bard ? set down 855  
 That Plara spent his youth in a grim town  
 Whose cramped ill-featured streets huddled about  
 The minster for protection, never out  
 Of its black belfry's shadow or bells' roar :  
 Brighter the sun illumed the suburbs, more 860

Ugly and absolute that shade's reproof  
 For any chance escape of joy some roof  
 Taller than they allowed the rest detect  
 Before the sole permitted laugh (suspect  
 Who could, 'twas meant for laughter, that ploughed  
 cheek's 865

Repulsive gleam ! ) when the sun stopp'd both peaks  
 Of the cleft belfry like a fiery wedge,  
 Then sank, a huge flame on its socket's edge,  
 Whose leavings on the grey glass oriel-pane  
 Were ghastly some few minutes more : no rain— 870  
 The Minster minded that ! in heaps the dust  
 Lay every where : that town, the Minster's trust,  
 Held Plara ; who, its denizen, bade hail  
 In twice twelve sonnets, Naddo Tempe's vale.

Exact the town, the minster and the street ! 875  
 As all mirth triumphs, sadness means defeat :  
 Lust triumphs and is gay, Love's triumphed o'er  
 And sad : but Lucio's sad : I said before  
 Love's sad, not Lucio ; one who loves may be  
 As gay his love has leave to hope, as he 880  
 Downcast that lusts' desire escapes the springe :  
 'Tis of the mood itself I speak, what tinge  
 Determines it, else colourless, or mirth,  
 Or melancholy, as from Heaven or Earth.

Ay, that's the variation's gist ! Indeed ? 885  
 Thus far advanced in safety then, proceed !  
 And having seen too what I saw, be bold  
 Enough encounter what I do behold  
 (That's sure) but you must take on trust ! Attack  
 The use and purpose of such sights ! Alack, 890  
 Not so unwisely hastes the crowd dispense  
 On Salinguerras praise in preference  
 To the Sordellos : men of action these !  
 Who seeing just as little as you please  
 Yet turn that little to account ; engage 895

With, do not gaze at ; carry on a stage  
 The work o' the world, not merely make report  
 The work existed ere their time—In short,  
 When at some future no-time a brave band  
 Sees, using what it sees, then shake my hand 900  
 In heaven, my brother ! Meanwhile where's the hurt  
 Of keeping the Makers-see on the alert  
 At whose defection mortals stare aghast  
 As though Heaven's bounteous windows were slammed  
 fast

Incontinent ? whereas all you beneath 905  
 Should scowl at, curse them, bruise lips, break their  
 teeth

Who ply the pullics for neglecting you :  
 And therefore have I moulded, made anew  
 A Man, delivered to be turned and tried,  
 Be angry with or pleased at. On your side 910

Have ye times, places, actors of your own ?  
 Try them upon Sordello once full-grown,  
 And then—ah then ! If Hercules first parched  
 His foot in Egypt only to be marched  
 A sacrifice for Jove with pomp to suit, 915

What chance have I ? The demigod was mute  
 Till at the altar, where time out of mind

Such guests became oblations, chaplets twined  
 His forehead long enough, and he began  
 Slaying the slayers, nor escaped a man— 920

Take not affront, my gentle audience ! whom  
 No Hercules shall make his hecatomb  
 Believe, none from his brows your chaplet rend—  
 That's your kind suffrage, yours, yes, yours, my friend  
 Whose great verse blares unintermittent on 925

Like any trumpeter at Marathon,  
 He'll testify who when Plataeas grew scant  
 Put up with Ætna for a stimulant !  
 And well too, I acknowledged, as it loomed

Over the Midland sea that morn, presumed 930  
 All day, demolished by the blazing West  
 At eve, while towards it, tilting cloudlets prest  
 Like Persian ships for Salamis. Friend, wear  
 A crest proud as desert while I declare  
 Had I a flawless ruby fit to wring 935  
 A tear its colour from that painted king  
 To lose, I would, for that one smile which went  
 To my heart, fling it in the sea content  
 Wearing your verse in place, an amulet  
 Sovereign against low-thoughtedness and fret ! 940  
 My English Eyebright, if you are not glad  
 That, as I stopped my task awhile, the sad  
 Disheveled form wherein I put mankind  
 To come at times and keep my pact in mind  
 Renewed me,—hear no crickets in the hedge 945  
 Nor let a glowworm spot the river's edge  
 At home, and may the summer showers gush  
 Without a warning from the missel thrush !  
 For, Eyebright, what I sing's the fate of such  
 As find our common nature (overmuch 950  
 Despised because restricted and unfit  
 To bear the burthen they impose on it)  
 Cling when they would discard it ; craving strength  
 To leap from the allotted world, at length  
 'Tis left—they floundering without a term 955  
 Each a God's germ, but doomed remain a germ  
 In unexpanded infancy, assure  
 Yourself, nor misconceive my portraiture  
 Nor undervalue its adornments quaint !  
 What seems a fiend perchance may prove a saint : 960  
 Ponder a story ancient pens transmit,  
 Then say if you condemn me or acquit.  
 John the Beloved, banished Antioch  
 For Patmos, bade collectively his flock  
 Farewell but set apart the closing eve 965

To comfort some his exile most would grieve  
He knew : a touching spectacle, that house  
In motion to receive him ! Xanthus' spouse  
You missed. made panther's meat a month since ; but  
Xanthus himself (for 'twas his nephew shut 970  
'Twixt boards and sawn asunder) Polycarp,  
Soft Charicle next year no wheel could warp  
To swear by Cæsar's fortune, with the rest  
Were ranged ; thro' whom the grey disciple prest  
Busily blessing right and left, just stopt 975  
To pat one infant's curls the hangman cropt  
Soon after, reached the portal ; on its hinge  
The door turns and he enters—what deep twinge  
Ruins the smiling mouth, those wide eyes fix  
Whereon ? How like some spectral candlestick's 980  
Branch the disciple's arms ! Dead swooned he, woke  
Anon, heaved sigh, made shift to gasp heart-broke  
Get thee behind me Satan ! have I toiled  
To no more purpose ? is the gospel foiled  
Here too, and o'er my son's, my Xanthus' hearth, 985  
Pourtrayed with sooty garb and features swarth—  
Ah Xanthus, am I to thy roof beguiled  
To see the—the—the Devil domiciled ?  
Whereto sobbed Xanthus, Father, 'tis yo<sup>u</sup> self  
Installed, a limning which our utmost pelt 990  
Went to procure against to-morrow's loss,  
And that's no twy-prong but a pastoral cross  
You're painted with ! The puckered brows unfold—  
And you shall hear Sordello's story told.

## BOOK THE FOURTH.

MEANTIME Ferrara lay in rueful case ;  
 The lady-city, for whose sole embrace  
 Her pair of suitors struggled, felt their arms  
 A brawny mischief to the fragile charms  
 They tugged for—one discovering to twist 5  
 Her tresses twice or thrice about his wrist  
 Secured a point of vantage—one, how best  
 He'd parry that by planting in her breast  
 His elbow-spike—both parties too intent  
 For noticing, howe'er the battle went, 10  
 Its conqueror would have a corpse to kiss.  
 May Boniface be duly damned for this !  
 Howled some old Ghibellin, as up he turned,  
 From the wet heap of rubbish where they burned  
 His house, a little skull with dazzling teeth : 15  
 A boon, sweet Christ—let Salinguerra seethe  
 In hell for ever, Christ, and let myself  
 Be there to laugh at him ! moaned some young Guelf  
 Stumbling upon a shrivelled hand nailed fast  
 To the charred lintel of the doorway last . 20  
 His father stood within to bid him speed.  
 The thoroughfares were overrun with weed  
 —Docks, quitchgrass, loathly mallows no man  
     plants.  
 The stranger none of its inhabitants  
 Crept out of doors to taste fresh air again, 25



And ask the purpose of a sumptuous train  
 Admitted on a morning ; every town  
 Of the East League was come by envoy down  
 To treat for Richard's ransom : here you saw  
 The Vicentine, here snowy oxen draw . 30  
 The Paduan carroch, its vermilion cross  
 On its white field : a-tiptoe o'er the fosse  
 Looked Legate Montelungo wistfully  
 After the flock of steeples he might spy  
 In Este's time, gone (doubts he) long ago 35  
 To mend the ramparts—sure the laggards know  
 The Pope's as good as here ! They paced the streets  
 More soberly. At last, Tanrello greets  
 The League, announced a pursuivant,—will match  
 Its courtesy, and labours to despatch 40  
 At earliest Tito, Friedrich's Pretor, sent  
 On pressing matters from his post at Trent  
 With Mainard Count of Tyrol,—simply waits  
 Their going to receive the delegates.  
 Tito ! Our delegates exchanged a glance, 45  
 And, keeping the main way, admired askance  
 The lazy engines of outlandish birth  
 Couched like a king each on its bank of earth—  
 Arbalist, manganel and catapult ;  
 While stationed by, as waiting a result, 50  
 Lean silent gangs of mercenaries ceased  
 Working to watch the strangers—this, at least,  
 Were better spared ; he scarce presumes gainsay  
 The League's decision ! Get our friend away  
 And profit for the future : how else teach 55  
 Azzo 'tis not so safe within claw's reach  
 Till Salinguerra's final gasp be blown ?  
 Those mere convulsive scratches find the bone  
 —Who bade him bloody the spent osprey's nare ?  
 The carrochs halted in the public square. 60  
 Pennons of every blazon once a-flaunt,

Men prattled, freelier than the crested gaunt  
 White ostrich with a horse-shoe in her beak  
 Was missing ; whosoever chose might speak  
*Ecelin* boldly out : so, *Ecelin* 65  
 Needed his wife to swallow half the sin  
 And sickens by himself : the devil's whelp  
 He styles his son dwindles away, no help  
 From conserves, your fine triple-curded froth  
 Of virgin's blood, your Venice viper-broth— 70  
 Eh ? Jubilate ! Tush ! no little word  
 You utter here that's not distinctly heard  
 At Oliero : he was absent sick  
 When we besieged Bassano—who i' the thick  
 O' the work perceived the progress Azzo made 75  
 Like *Ecelin* ? through his witch *Adelaide*  
 Who managed it so well that night by night  
 At their bed-foot stood up a soldier-sprite  
 First fiesh, pale by-and-by without a wound,  
 And when he came with eyes filmed as in swoond 80  
 They knew the place was taken—Ominous  
 Your Ghibellins should get what cautelous  
 Old Redbeard sought from Azzo's sire to wrench  
 Vainly ; St. George contrived his town a trench  
 O' the marshes, an impermeable bar : 85  
 Young *Ecelin* is meant the tutelar  
 Of Padua rather ; veins embrace upon  
 His hand like Brenta and Bacchiglion . . .  
 What now ? The founts ! God's bread, touch not a  
 plank !  
 A crawling hell of carrion—every tank 90  
 Choke-full ! found out just now to Cino's cost—  
 The same who gave Taurello's side for lost,  
 And, making no account of fortune's freaks,  
 Refused to budge from Padua then, but sneaks  
 Back now with Concorezzi—'faith ! they drag 95  
 Their carroch to San Vital, plant the flag

On his own Palace so adroitly razed  
 He knew it not ; a sort of Guelf folk gazed  
 And laughed apart ; Cino disliked their air—  
 Must pluck up spirit, show he does not care— 100  
 Seats himself on the tank's edge—will begin  
 To hum, *za za, Cavalier Eccelin*—  
 A silence ; he gets warmer, clinks to chime,  
 Now both feet plough the ground, deeper each time,  
 At last, *za za*, and up with a fierce kick 105  
 Comes his own mother's face caught by the thick  
 Grey hair about his spur !

Which means, they lift

The covering Taurello made a shift  
 To stretch upon the truth ; as well avoid  
 Further disclosures ; leave them thus employed. 110  
 Our dropping Autumn morning clears apace,  
 And poor Ferrara puts a softened face  
 On her misfortunes, save one spot—this tall  
 Huge foursquare line of red brick garden-wall  
 Bastioned within by trees of every sort 115  
 On three sides, slender, spreading, long and short,  
 (Each grew as it contrived, the poplar ramped,  
 The fig-tree reared itself,) but stark and cramped,  
 Made fools of ; whence upon the very edge,  
 Running'twixt trunk and trunk to smother one ledge 120  
 Of shade, are shrubs inserted, warp and woof,  
 Which smother up that variance. Scale the roof  
 Of solid tops and o'er the slope you slide  
 Down to a grassy space level and wide,  
 Here and there dotted with a tree, but trees 125  
 Of rarer leaf, each foreigner at ease,  
 Set by itself ; and in the centre spreads,  
 Born upon three uneasy leopards' heads ;  
 A laver, broad and shallow, one bright spirt  
 Of water bubbles in : the walls begirt 130  
 With trees leave off on either hand : pursue

Your path along a wondrous avenue  
 Those walls abut on, heaped of gleamy stone.  
 With aloes leering everywhere, grey-grown  
 From many a Moonish summer; how they wind 135  
 Out of the fissures ! liker to bind  
 The building than those rusted cramps which drop  
 Already in the eating sunshine. Stop  
 Yon fleeting shapes above there ! Ah, the pride  
 Or else despair of the whole country-side— 140  
 A range of statues, swarming o'er with wasps,  
 God, goddess, woman, man, your Greek rough-rasps  
 In crumbling Naples marble ! meant to look  
 Like those Messina marbles Constance took  
 Delight in, or Taurello's self conveyed 145  
 To Mantua for his mistress, Adelaide,  
 A certain font with caryatides  
 Since cloistered at Gouto ; only, these  
 Are up and doing, not abashed, a troop  
 Able to right themselves—who see you, stoop 150  
 O' the instant after you their arms ! unplucked  
 By this or that you pass ; for they conduct  
 To terrace raised on terrace, and, between,  
 Creatures of brighter mould and braver mien  
 Than any yet, the choicest of the Isle 155  
 No doubt ; here, left a sullen breathing-while,  
 Up-gathered on himself the Fighter stood  
 For his last fight, and, wiping treacherous blood  
 Out of the eyelids just held ope beneath  
 Those shading fingers in their iron sheath, 160  
 Steadied his strengths amid the buzz and stir  
 Of a dusk hideous amphitheatre  
 At the announcement of his over-match  
 To wind the day's diversion up, despatch  
 Their pertinacious friend : while, limbs one heap, 165  
 The Slave, no breath in her round mouth, watched  
 leap

Dart after dart forth as her hero's car  
 Clove dizzily the solid of the war  
 —Let coil about his knees for pride in him.  
 We reach the farthest terrace and the grim  
 San Pietro Palace stops us. 170

Such the state  
 Of Salinguerra's plan to emulate  
 Sicilian marvels that his girlish wife  
 Retrude still might lead her ancient life  
 In her new home—whereat enlarged so much 175  
 Neighbours upon the novel princely touch  
 He took who here imprisons Boniface.  
 Here must the Envoys come to sue for grace;  
 And here, emerging from the labyrinth  
 Below, two minstrels pause beside the plinth 180  
 Of the door-pillar.

He had really left  
 Verona for the cornfields (a poor theft  
 From the morass) where Este's camp was made,  
 The Envoys' march, the Legate's cavalcade—  
 Looked cursorily o'er, but scarce as when, 185  
 Eager for cause to stand aloof from men  
 At every point save the fantastic tie  
 Acknowledged in his boyish sophistry,  
 He made account of such. A crowd; he meant  
 To task the whole of it; each part's intent 190  
 Concerned him therefore, and the more he pried  
 The less became Sordello satisfied  
 With his own figure at the moment. Sought  
 He respite from his task? descried he aught  
 Novel in the anticipated sight 195  
 Of all these livers upon all delight?  
 A phalanx as of myriad points combined  
 Whereby he still had imaged that mankind  
 His youth was passed in dreams of rivalling,  
 His age—in plans to show at least the thing 200

- So dreamed, but now he hastened to impress  
With his own will, effect a happiness  
From theirs,—supply a body to his soul  
Thence, and become eventually whole  
With them as he had hoped to be without— 205  
Made these the mankind he was mad about?  
Because a few of them were notable  
Must all be figured worthy note? As well  
Expect to find Taurello's triple line  
Of trees a single and prodigious pine. 210  
Real pines rose here and there, but, close among,  
Thrust into and mixed up with pines, a throng  
Of shrubs you saw, a nameless common sort  
O'erpast in dreams, left out of the report,  
Fast hurried into corners, or at best 215  
Admitted to be fancied like the rest.  
Reckon that morning's proper chiefs; how few!  
And yet the people grew, the people grew,  
Grew ever, as with many there indeed,  
More left behind and most who should succeed 220  
Simply in virtue of their faces, eyes,  
Petty enjoyments and huge miseries,  
Were veritably mingled with, made great  
Those chiefs: no overlooking Mainard's state  
Nor Concorezzi's station, but instead 225  
Of stopping there, each dwindled to be head  
Of infinite and absent Tyrolese  
Or Paduans; startling too the more that these  
Seemed passive and disposed of, uncared for,  
Yet doubtless on the whole (quoth Eglamor) 230  
Smiling—for if a wealthy man decays  
And out of store of such must wear all days,  
One tattered suit alike in sun and shade,  
'Tis commonly some tarnished fine brocade  
Fit for a feast-night's flourish and no more; 235  
Nor otherwise poor Misery from her store

Of looks is fain upgather, keep unfurled  
 For common wear as she goes through the world  
 The faint remainder of some worn-out smile  
 Meant for a feast-night's service merely. While 240  
 Crowd upon crowd rose on Sordello thus,—  
 Crowds no way interfering to discuss  
 Much less dispute life's joys with one employed  
 In envying them, or, if they enjoyed,  
 There lingered somewhat indefinable 245  
 In every look and tone, the muth as well  
 As woe, that fixed at once his estimate  
 Of the result, their good or bad estate—  
 Old memories, flocked but with new effect :  
 And the new body, ere he could suspect, 250  
 Cohered, mankind and he were really fused,  
 The new self seemed impatient to be used  
 By him, but utterly another way  
 Than that anticipated : strange to say,  
 They were too much below him, more in thrall 255  
 Than he, the adjunct than the principal.  
 What bootéd scattered brilliances ?—the mind  
 Of any number he might hope to bind  
 And stamp with his own thought, howe'er august,  
 If all the rest should grovel in the dust ? 260  
 No : first a mighty equilibrium sure  
 To be established, privilege procure  
 For them himself had long possessed ! he felt  
 An error, an exceeding error melt—  
 While he was occupied with Mantuan chants 265  
 Beloved him think of men and of their wants  
 Such as he now distinguished every side,  
 As his own want that might be satisfied,  
 And, after that, of wondrous qualities  
 Of his own soul demanding exercise, 270  
 And like demand it longer, nor a claim  
 On their part, nor was virtue in the aim

At serving them on his, but, past retrieve,  
 He in their toils felt with them, nor could leave,  
 Wonder that in the eagerness to rule, 275  
 Impress his will upon them, he the fool  
 Had never entertained the obvious thought  
 This last of his arrangements would be fraught  
 With good to them as well, and he should be  
 Rejoiced thereat; and if, as formerly, 280  
 He sighed the merry time of life must fleet,  
 'Twas deeper now, for could the crowds repeat  
 Their poor experiences? His hand that shook  
 Was twice to be deplored. The Legate, look!  
 With eyes, like fresh-blown thrush-eggs on a thread, 285  
 Faint-blue and loosely floating in his head,  
 Large tongue, moist open mouth; and this long while  
 That owner of the idiotic smile  
 Serves them! He fortunately saw in time  
 His fault however, and the office prime 290  
 Includes the secondary—best accept  
 Both offices; Taurello its adept  
 Could teach him the preparatory one,  
 And how to do what he had fancied done  
 Long previously, ere take the greater task 295  
 How render then these people happy? ask  
 The people's friends: for there must be one good,  
 One way to it—the Cause! he understood  
 The meaning now of Palma; else why are  
 The great ado, the trouble wide and far, 300  
 These Guelfs and Ghibellins, the Lombard's hope  
 Or its despair! 'twixt Emperor or Pope  
 The confused shifting sort of Eden tale—  
 Of hardihood recurring still to fail—  
 That foreign interloping fiend, this fice 305  
 And native overbrooding Deity—  
 Yet a dire fascination o'er the palms  
 His presence ruined troubling through the calms



Of Paradise—or, on the other hand,  
 The Pontiff, as your Kaisers understand, 310  
 That, snake-like cursed of God to love the ground,  
 With lulling eye breaks in the noon profound  
 Some saving ree—who but the Kaiser drest  
 As the disloughing angel of the pest  
 Then yet that pest bedropt, flat head, full fold, 315  
 With coruscating dower of dyes; behold  
 The secret, so to speak, and master-spring  
 Of the whole contest! which of them shall bring  
 Men good—perchance the most good—ay, it may  
 Be that; the question is which knows the way. 320  
 And hereupon Count Mainard strutted past  
 Out of San Pietro; never looked the last  
 Of archers, slingers; and our friend began  
 To recollect strange modes of serving man—  
 Arbalist, catapult, brake, manganel, 325  
 And more: this way of theirs may, who can tell,  
 Need perfecting, said he: all's better solved  
 At once: Taurello 'twas the task devolved  
 On late—confront Taurello!

And at last  
 They did confront him. Scarcely an hour past 330  
 When forth Sordello came, older by years  
 Than at his entry. Unexampled fears  
 Oppressed him, and he staggered off, blind, mute  
 And deaf, like some fresh-mutilated brute,  
 Into Ferrara—not the empty town 335  
 That morning witnessed: he went up and down  
 Streets whence the veil was stripped shred after  
 shred,  
 So that in place of huddling with their dead  
 Indoors to answer Salinguerra's ends,  
 Its folk make shift to crawl and sit like friends 340  
 With any one. A woman gave him choice  
 Of her two daughters, the infantile voice

Or dimpled knee, for half a chain his throat  
 Was clasped with ; but an archer knew the coat—  
 Its blue cross and eight lilies, bade beware 345  
 One dogging him in concert with the pair  
 Though thrumming on the sleeve that hid his knife.  
 Night set in early, autumn dews fell rise,  
 And fires were kindled while the Leaguers' mass  
 Began at every carroch—he must pass 350  
 Between that kneeling people : presently  
 The carroch of Verona caught his eye  
 With purple trappings ; silently he bent  
 Over its fire, when voices violent  
 Began, Affirm not whom the youth was like 355  
 That, striking from the porch, I did not strike  
 Again ; I too have chesnut hair ; my kin  
 Hate Azzo and stand up for Eccelin ;  
 Here, minstrel, drive bad thoughts away ; sing ; take  
 My glove for guerdon ! and for that man's sake 360  
 He turned : A song of Eglamor's ! scarce named,  
 When, Our Sordello's rather ! all exclaimed ;  
 Is not Sordello famousest for rhyme ?  
 He had been happy to deny, this time ;  
 Profess as heretofore the aching head, 365  
 The failing heart ; suspect that in his stead  
 Some true Apollo had the charge of them,  
 Was champion to reward or to condemn  
 So his intolerable risk might shift  
 Or share itself ; but Naddo's precious gift 370  
 Of gifts returned, be certain ! at the close—  
 I made that, said he to a youth who rose  
 As if to hear : 'twas Palma through the band  
 Conducted him in silence by the hand.  
 Back now for Salinguerra. Tito of Trent 375  
 Gave place, remember, to the pair ; who went  
 In turn at Montelungo's visit—one  
 After the other are they come and gone.

A drear vast presence-chamber roughly set  
 In order for this morning's use ; you met 380  
 The grim black twy-necked eagle, coarsely blacked  
 With ochre on the naked wall, nor lacked  
 There green and yellow tokens either side ;  
 But the new symbol Tito brought had tried  
 The Legate's patience—nay, if Palma knew 385  
 What Salinguerra almost meant to do  
 Until the sight of her restored his lip  
 A certain half-smile three months' chieftainship  
 Had banished ! Afterward the Legate found  
 No change in him, nor asked what badge he  
 wound 390  
 And unwound carelessly ! Now sate the Chief  
 Silent as when our couple left whose brief  
 Encounter wrought so opportune effect  
 In thoughts he summoned not, nor would reject—  
 Though time if ever, 'twas to pause now—fix 395  
 On any sort of ending : wiles and tricks  
 Exhausted, judge ! his charge, the crazy town,  
 Just managed to be hindered crashing down—  
 His last sound troops ranged—care observed to post  
 His last of the maimed soldiers uncounted— 400  
 So much was plain enough, but somehow struck  
 Him not before : and now with this strange luck  
 Of Tito's news, rewarding his address  
 So well, what thought he of ? How the success  
 With Friedrich's rescript there, would either flush 405  
 Ecelin's fiercest scruples up, or flush  
 Young Ecelin's white cheek, or, last, exempt  
 Himself from telling what there was to tempt ;  
 No : that this minstrel was Romano's last  
 Servant—himself the first ! Could he contrast 410  
 The whole ! that minstrel's thurty annuns spent  
 In doing nought, his notablest event  
 This morning's journey hither, as we told—

Who yet was lean, outworn and really old,  
 A stammering awkward youth (scarce dared he raise 415  
 His eye before that magisterial gaze)  
 —And Salinguerra with his fears and hopes  
 Of sixty years, his Emperors and Popes,  
 Cares and contrivances, yet you would say  
 A youth 'twas nonchalantly looked away 420  
 Through the embrasure northward o'er the sick  
 Expostulating trees—so agile quick  
 And graceful turned the head on the broad chest  
 Encased in pliant steel, his constant vest,  
 Whence split the sun off in a spray of fire 425  
 Across the room; and, loosened of its tie  
 Of steel, that head let see the comely brown  
 Large massive locks discoloured as a crown  
 Encircled them, so frayed the basnet where  
 A sharp white line divided clean the hair; 430  
 Glossy above, glossy below, it swept  
 Curling and fine about a brow thus kept  
 Calm, laid coat upon coat, marble and sound:  
 This was the mystic mark the Tuscan found,  
 Mused of, turned over books about. Square-faced, 435  
 No lion more; two vivid eyes, enbayed  
 In hollows filled with many a shade and streak  
 Settling from the bold nose and bearded cheek;  
 Nor might the half-smile reach them that deformed  
 A lip supremely perfect else—unwarmed, 440  
 Unwidened, less or more; indifferent  
 Whether on trees or men his thoughts were bent—  
 Thoughts rarely, after all, in trim and train  
 As now: a period was fulfilled again;  
 Such in a series made his life, compressed 445  
 In each, one story serving for the rest—  
 Therefore he smiled. Beyond stretched garden-  
 grounds  
 Where late the adversary, breaking bounds,

Procured him an occasion That above,  
 That eagle, testified he could improve 450  
 Effectually : the Kaiser's symbol lay  
 Beside his rescript, a new badge by way  
 Of baldric ; while another thing that marred  
 Alike emprize, achievement and reward,  
 Eccelin's missive was conspicuous too. 455  
 What a past life those flying thoughts pursue !  
 As his no name in Mantua half so old ;  
 But at Ferrara, where his sires enrolled  
 It latterly, the Adelardi spared  
 Few means to rival them : both factions shared 460  
 Ferrara, so that, counted out, 'twould yield  
 A product very like the city's shield,  
 Half black and white, or Ghibelin and Guelf,  
 As after Salinguerra styled himself  
 And Este who, till Marchesalla died 465  
 —Last of the Adelardi, never tried  
 His fortune there ; but Marchesalla's child  
 Transmits (can Blacks and Whites be reconciled  
 And young Taurello wed Linguetta) wealth  
 And sway to a sole grasp : each treats by stealth 470  
 Already : when the Guelfs, the Ravennese  
 Arrive, assault the Pietro quarter, seize  
 Linguetta, and are gone ! Our first dismay  
 Abated somewhat, hurries do vn to lay  
 The after indignation Boniface, 475  
 No meaner spokesman : Learn the full disgrace  
 Averted ere you blame us—wont to rate  
 Your Salinguerra, and sole potentate  
 That might have been, 'mongst Este's valvassors—  
 Ay, Azzo's—who, not privy to, abhors 480  
 Our step—but we were zealous. Azzo's then  
 To do with ! Straight a meeting of old men :  
 The Lombard Eagle of the azure sphere  
 With Italy to build in, builds he here ?

This deemed—the other owned upon advice—	485
A third reflected on the matter twice—	
In fine, young Salinguerra's staunchest friends	
Talked of the townsmen making him amends,	
Gave him a goshawk, and affirmed there was	
Rare sport, one morning, over the morass	490
A mile or so. He sauntered through the plain,	
Was restless, fell to thinking, turned again	
In time for Azzo's entry with the bride :	
Count Boniface rode smirking at his side ;	
There's half Ferrara with her, whispers flew,	495
And all Ancona ! If the stripling knew !	
Anon the stripling was in Sicily	
Where Heinrich ruled in right of Constance ; he	
Was gracious nor his guest incapable ;	
Each understood the other. So it fell,	500
One Spring, when Azzo, thoroughly at ease,	
Had near forgotten what precise degrees	
He crept by into such a downy seat,	
Over the Count trudged in a special heat	
To bid him of God's love dislodge from each	505
Of Salinguerra's Palaces ; a breach	
Might yawn else not so readily to shut,	
For who was just arrived at Mantua but	
The youngster, sword on thigh, tuft upon chin,	
With tokens for Celano, P'celin,	510
Pistore and the like ! Next news : no whit	
Do any of Ferrara's domes befit	
His wife of Heinrich's very blood : a band	
Of foreigners assemble, understand	
Garden-constructing, level and surround,	515
Build up and bury in. A last news crowned	
The consternation : since his infant's birth	
He only waits they end his wondrous girth	
Of trees that link San Pietro with Tomà	
To visit us. When, as its Podestà	520

Regaled him at Vicenza, Este, there  
 With Boniface beforehand, each aware  
 Of plots in progress, gave alarm, expelled  
 A party which abetted him, but yelled  
 Too hastily. The burning and the flight, 535  
 And how Taurello, occupied that night  
 With Ecclin, lost wife and son, were told :  
 —Not how he bore the blow, retained his hold,  
 Got friends safe through, left enemies the worst  
 O' the fray, and hardly seemed to care at first— 530  
 But afterward you heard not constantly  
 Of Salingueira's House so sure to be !  
 Though Azzo simply gained by the event  
 A shifting of his plagues—this one content  
 To fall behind the other and estrange, 535  
 You will not say, his nature, but so change  
 That in Romano sought he wife and child,  
 And for Romano's sake was reconciled  
 To losing individual life, deep sunk,  
 A very pollard mortised in a trunk 540  
 Which Arabs out of wantonness contrive  
 Shall dwindle that the alien stock may thrive  
 Till forth that vine-palm feathers to the root  
 And red drops moisten them its arid fruit.  
 Once set on Adelaide, the subtle mate 545  
 And wholly at his beck, to emulate  
 The Church's valiant women deed for deed,  
 To paragon her namesake, win the meed  
 Of its Matilda, and they overbore  
 The rest of Lombardy—not as before 550  
 By an instinctive truculence, but patched  
 The Kaiser's strategy until it matched  
 The Pontiff's, sought old ends by novel means :  
 Only, Romano Salinguerra screens.  
 Heinrich was somewhat of the tardiest 555  
 To comprehend, nor Philip acquiesced

At once in the arrangement ; reasoned, plied  
 His friend with offers of another bride,  
 A statelier function—fruitlessly ; 'tis plain  
 Taurello's somehow one to let remain 560  
 Obscure and Otho, free to judge of both,  
 —Ecelin the unready, harsh and loth,  
 And this more plausible and facile wight  
 With every point a-sparkle—chose the right,  
 Admiring how his predecessors hap'd 565  
 On the wrong man : thus, quoth he, wits are warped  
 By outsides ! Carelessly, withal, his life  
 Suffered its many turns of peace and strife  
 In many lands—you hardly could surprise  
 A man who shamed Sordello (recognise) 570  
 In this as much beside, that, unconcerned,  
 What qualities are nat'ral or earned,  
 With no ideal of graces, as they came  
 He took them, singularly well the same —  
 Speaking a dozen languages, because 575  
 Your Greek eludes you, leave the least of flaws  
 In contracts ; while, through Arab lore, deter  
 Who may the Tuscan, once Jove tried for her,  
 From Friedrich's path ! Friedrich, whose pilgrimage  
 The same man puts aside, whom he'll engage 580  
 To leave next year John Brienne in the lurch,  
 And see Bassano for Saint Francis' church  
 — Profound on Guido the Bolognian's piece  
 That, if you lend him credit, rivals Greece—  
 Angels, with aureoles like golden quoits 585  
 Pitched home, applauding Ecelin's exploits  
 In Painmurie. He strung the angelot ;  
 Made rhymes thereto ; for prowess, clove he not  
 Tiso, last siege, from crest to crupper ? why  
 Detail you thus a varied mastery 590  
 But that Taurello, ever on the watch  
 For men, to read their hearts and thereby catch



Their capabilities and purposes,  
 Displayed himself so far as displayed these :  
 While our Sordello only cared to know 595  
 About men as a means for him to show  
 Himself, and men were much or little worth  
 According as they kept in or drew forth  
 That self ; the other's choicest instruments  
 Surmised him shallow. Meantime malcontents 600  
 Dropped off, town after town grew wiser ; how  
 Change the world's face ? said people ; as 'tis now  
 It has been, will be ever : very fine  
 Subjecting things profane to things divine  
 In talk : this contumacy will fatigue 605  
 The vigilance of Este and the League,  
 Observe ! accordingly, their basement sapped,  
 Azzo and Boniface were soon entrapped  
 By Ponte Alto, and in one month's space  
 Slept at Verona : either left a brace 610  
 Of sons—so three years after, either's pair  
 Lost Guglielm and Aldobrand its heir :  
 Azzo remained and Richard—all the stay  
 Of Este and St. Boniface, at bay  
 As 'twere ; when either Ecelm grew old 615  
 Or his brain altered—not the proper mould  
 For new appliances—his old palm stock  
 Endured no influx of stranger strengths : he'd rock  
 As in a drunkenness, or chuckle low  
 As proud of the completeness of his woe, 620  
 Then weep—real tears ! Now make some mad on-  
 slaught  
 On Este, heedless of the lesson taught  
 So painfully—now cringe, sue peace, but peace  
 At price of all advantage ; therefore cease  
 The fortunes of Romano ! Up at last 625  
 Rose Este and Romano sank as fast.  
 And men remarked this sort of peace and war

Commenced while Salinguerra was afar :  
And every friend besought him, but in vain,  
To wait his old adherent, call again, 630  
Taurello : not he !—who had daughters, sons,  
Could plot himself, nor needed any one's  
Advice. 'Twas Adelaide's remaining staunch  
Prevented his destruction root and branch  
Forthwith ; Goito grew green above her, gay 635  
He made alliances, gave lands away  
To whom it pleased accept them, and withdrew  
For ever from the world. Taurello, who  
Was summoned to the convent, then refused  
A word—however patient, thus abused, 640  
At Este's mercy through his imbecile  
Ally, was fain dismiss the foolish smile,  
And a few movements of the happier sort  
Changed matters, put himself in men's report  
As heretofore ; he had to fight, beside, 645  
And that became him ever. So in pride  
And flushing of this kind of second youth  
He dealt a good-will blow : Este in truth  
Was prone—and men remembered, somewhat late,  
A laughing old outrageous stifled hate 650  
He bore that Este—how it would outbreak  
At times spite of disguise, like an earthquake  
In sunny weather—as that noted day  
When with his hundred friends he offered slay  
Azzo before the Kaiser's face : and how 655  
On Azzo's calm refusal to allow  
A liegeman's challenge straight he too was calmed :  
His hate, no doubt, would bear to lie embalmed,  
Bricked up, the moody Pharaoh, to survive  
All intermediate crumbings, be alive 660  
At earth's catastrophe—'twas Este's crash  
Not Azzo's he demanded, so no rash  
Procedure ! Este's true antagonist

Rose out of Ecelin : all voices whist,  
 All eyes were sharpened, wit predicted. He 665  
 'Twas leaped in the embrasure presently,  
 Amused with his own efforts, now, to trace  
 With his steel-sheathed forefinger Friedrich's face  
 I' the dust : and as the trees waved sore, his smile  
 Deepened, and words expressed its thought ere-  
 while. 670

Ay, fairly housed at last, my old compeer ?  
 That we should stick together all the year  
 I kept Vicenza !—How old Boniface,  
 Old Azzo caught us in its market place,  
 He by that pillar, I this pillar, each 675  
 In mud swing, more than fury of his speech,  
 Egging our rabble on to disavow  
 Allegiance to the Marquis—Bacchus, how  
 They caught us ! Ecelin must turn their drudge ;  
 Nor, if released, will Salinguerra grudge 680  
 Paying arrears of tribute due long since—  
 Bacchus ! My man, could promise then, nor wince,  
 The bones-and-muscles ! sound of wind and limb,  
 Spoke he the set excuse I framed for him ;  
 And now he sits me, slaving and mute, 685  
 Intent on chasing each starved purple foe'  
 Benumbed past aching with the altar shal. —  
 Will no vein throb there w'en some monk shall blab  
 Spitefully to the circle of bald scalps  
 Friedrich's affirmed to be our side the Alps 690  
 —Eh, brother Lactance, brother Anaclet ?  
 Sworn to abjure the world and the world's fret,  
 God's own now ? drop the dormitory bar,  
 Enfold the scanty grey serge scapular  
 Twice o'er the cowl to muffle memories out— 695  
 So ! bat the midnight whisper turns a shout,  
 Eyes wink, mouths open, pulses circulate  
 In the stone walls : the past, the world you hate

Is with you, ambush, open field—or see  
 The surging flame—they fire Vicenza—glee ! 700  
 Follow, let Pilio and Bernardi chafe—  
 Bring up the Mantuans—through San Biagio—safe !  
 Ah, the mad people waken? Ah, they writhe  
 And reach you? if they block the gate—no tithe  
 Can pass—keep back you Bassanese ! the edge, 705  
 Use the edge—shear, thrust, hew, melt down the  
 wedge,

Let out the black of those black upturned eyes !  
 Hell—are they sprinkling fire too? the blood fries  
 And hisses on your brass gloves as they tear  
 Those upturned faces choaking with despair. 710  
 Brave ! Shudder through the reeking gate—how  
 now ?

You six had charge of her? And then the vow  
 Comes, and the foam spirts, hair's plucked, till one  
 shriek

(I hear it) and you fling—you cannot speak—  
 Your gold-flowered basnet to a man who haled 715  
 The Adelaide he dared scarce view unveiled  
 This morn, naked across the fire : how crown  
 The archer that exhausted lays you down  
 Your infant, smiling at the flame. and dies?  
 While one, while mine . . .

Bacchus ! I think there lies 720  
 More than one corpse there (and he paced the room)  
 —Another cinder somewhere—'twas my doom  
 Beside, my doom : if Adelaide is dead  
 I am the same, this Azzo lives instead  
 Of that to me, and we pull any how 725  
 Este into a heap—the matter's now  
 At the true juncture slipping us so oft ;  
 Ay, Heinrich died and Otho, please you, doffed  
 His crown at such a juncture : let but hold  
 Our Friedrich's purpose, let this chain enfold 730

The neck of . . . who but this same Ecelin ?  
 That must recoil when the best days begin—  
 Recoil ? that's nought ; if the recoiler leaves  
 His name for me to fight with, no one grieves !  
 But he must interfere, forsooth, unlock 735  
 His cloister to become my stumbling-block  
 Just as of old ! Ay, ay, there 'tis again—  
 The land's inevitable Head—explain  
 The reverences that subject us ! Count  
 These Ecelins now ! not to say as fount, 740  
 Originating power of thought, from twelve  
 That drop i' the trenches they joined hands to delve  
 Six shall surpass him, but . . . why, men must twine  
 Somehow with something ! Ecelin's a fine  
 Clear name ! 'Twere simpler, doubtless, twine with  
 me 745

At once : our cloistered friend's capacity  
 Was of a sort ! I had to share myself  
 In fifty portions, like an o'ertasked elf  
 That's forced illume in fifty points the vast  
 Rare vapour he's environed by : at last 750  
 My strengths, though sorely frittered, e'en converge  
 And crown—no, Bacchus, they have yet to urge  
 The man be crowned !

That aloe, an 'a durst,  
 Would climb ! just such a bloated sprawler first  
 I noted in Messina's castle court 755  
 The day I came, and Heinrich asked in sport  
 If I would pledge my faith to win him back  
 His right in Lombardy ; for, once bid pack  
 Marauders, he continued, in my stead  
 You rule, Taurello ! and upon this head 760  
 Laid the silk glove of Constance—I see her  
 Too, mantled head to foot in miniver,  
 Retrude following !

I am absolved

From further toil : the empery devolved  
 On me, 'twas Tito's word : and think, to lay 765  
 For once my plan, pursue my plan my way,  
 Prompt nobody, and render an account  
 Taurello to Taurello ! nay, I mount  
 To Friedrich—he conceives the post I kept,  
 Who did true service, able or inept, 770  
 Who's worthy guerdon, Ecelin or I :  
 Me guerdoned, counsel follows ; would he vie  
 With the Pope really ? Azzo, Boniface  
 Compose a right-arm Hohenstauffen's race  
 Must break ere govern Lombardy ; I point 775  
 How easy 'twere to twist, once out of joint,  
 The socket from the bone ; my Azzo's stare  
 Meanwhile ! for I, this idle strap to wear,  
 Shall—fret myself abundantly, what end  
 To serve ? There's left me twenty years to spend 780  
 —How better than my old way ? Had I one  
 Who laboured overthrow my work—a son  
 Hatching with Azzo superb treachery,  
 To root my pines up and then poison me,  
 Suppose—'twere worth while frustrate that ! Beside 785  
 Another life's ordained me : the world's tide  
 Rolls, and what hope of parting from the press  
 Of waves, a single wave through weariness  
 That's gently led aside, laid upon shore ?  
 My life must be lived out in foam and roar, 790  
 No question. Fifty years the province held  
 Taurello ; troubles raised, and troubles quelled.  
 He in the midst—who leaves this quaint stone place,  
 Those trees a year or two, then, not a trace  
 Of him ! How obtain hold, fetter men's tongues 795  
 Like that Sordello with the foolish songs—  
 To which, despite our bustle, he is linked ?  
 —Flowers one may tease, that never seem extinct ;  
 Ay, that patch, surely, green as ever, where

I set Her Moorish lentisk, by the stair, 800  
 To overawe the aloes—and we trod  
 Those flowers, how call you such ? into the sod ;  
 A stately foreigner—and worlds of pain  
 To make it thrive, arrest rough winds—all vain !  
 It would decline—these would not be destroyed— 805  
 And now, where is it ? where can you avoid  
 The flowers ? I frighten children twenty years  
 Longer !—which way, too, Ecelin appears  
 To thwart me, for his son's besotted youth  
 Gives promise of the proper tiger-tooth, 810  
 They prattle, at Vicenza ! Fate, fate, fate,  
 My fine Taurello ! go you, promulgate  
 Friedrich's decree, and here's shall aggrandise  
 Young Ecelin—our Prefect's badge ! a prize  
 Too precious, certainly.

How now ? Compete 815  
 With my old comrade ? shuffle from their seat  
 His children ? Paltry dealing ! don't I know  
 Ecelin ? now, I think, and years ago !  
 What's changed—the weakness ? did not I compound  
 For that, and undertake preserve him sound 820  
 Despite it ? Say Taurello's hankering  
 After the boy's preferment—this play-thing  
 To carry, Bacchus ! And he laughed.

Remark  
 Why schemes wherein cold-blooded men embark  
 Prosper, when your enthusiastic sort 825  
 Fails : while these last are ever stopping short—  
 (Much to be done—so little they can do !)  
 The careless tribe see nothing to pursue  
 Should they desist ; meantime their scheme succeeds.  
 Thoughts were caprices in the course of deeds 830  
 Methodic with Taurello ; so he turned,  
 Enough amused by fancies fairly earned  
 Of Este's horror-struck submitted neck,

And Boniface completely at his beck,  
 To his own petty but immediate doubt 835  
 If he could pacify the League without  
 Conceding Richard ; just to this was brought  
 That interval of vain discursive thought !  
 As, shall I say, some Ethiop, past pursuit  
 Of all enslavers, dips a shackled foot, 840  
 Burnt to the blood, into the drowsy black  
 Enormous water current, his sole track  
 To his own tribe again, where he is King :  
 And laughs because he guesses, numbering  
 The yellower poison-wattles on the pouch 845  
 Of the first lizard wrested from its couch  
 Under the slime (whose skin, the while, he strips  
 To cure his nostril with, and festered lips,  
 And eyeballs bloodshot through the desert blast)  
 That he has reached its boundary, at last 850  
 May breathe;—thinks o'er enchantments of the South  
 Sovereign to plague his enemies, their mouth  
 And nails, and hair ; but, these enchantments tried  
 In fancy, puts them soberly aside  
 For truth, cool projects a return with friends, 855  
 The likelihood of winning wild amends  
 Ere long ; thinks that, takes comfort silently,  
 And, from the river's brink, his wrongs and he,  
 Hugging revenge close to their hearts, are soon  
 Off-striding for the Mountains of the Moon. 860  
 Midnight : the watcher nodded on his spear,  
 Since clouds dispersing left a passage clear,  
 If any meagre and discoloured moon  
 Should venture forth ; and such was peering soon  
 Above the harassed city—her close lanes 865  
 Closer, not half so tapering her fanes,  
 As though she shrunk into herself to keep  
 What little life was saved more safely. Heap  
 By heap the watch-fires mouldered, and beside



The blackest spoke Sordello and replied 870  
 Palma with none to listen. 'Tis your Cause—  
 What makes a Ghibellin? There should be laws—  
 (Remember how my youth escaped! I trust  
 To you for manhood, Palma; tell me just  
 As any child)—laws secretly at work 875  
 Explaining this. Assure me good may lurk  
 Under the bad; my multitude has part  
 In your designs, their welfare is at heart  
 With Salinguerra, to their interest  
 Refer the deeds he dwelt on—so divest 880  
 Our conference of much that scared me: why  
 Affect that heartless tone to Tito? I  
 Esteemed myself, yes, in my inmost mind  
 This morn, a recreant to that wide mankind  
 O'erlooked till now: why boast my spirit's force, 885  
 —That force denied its object? why divorce  
 These, then admire my spirit's flight the same,  
 As though it bore a burden which could tame  
 No pinion, from dead void to living space?  
 —That orb consigned to chaos and disgrace, 890  
 Why vaunt complacently my frantic dance,  
 Making a feat's facilities enhance  
 The marvel? But I front Taurello, one  
 Of happier fate, and what I should have done  
 He does; the multitude aye paramount 895  
 With him, its making progress may account  
 For his abiding still: when—but you heard  
 His talk with Tito—the excuse preferred  
 For burning those five hostages—and broached  
 By way of blind, as you and I approached, 900  
 I do believe.

She spoke: then he, My thought  
 Plainer expressed! All Friedrich's profit—nought  
 Of these meantime, of conquests to achieve  
 For them, of wretchednesses to relieve

While profiting that Friedrich. Azzo, too, 905  
 Supports a cause : what is it ? Guelfs pursue  
 Their ends by means like yours, or better ?

When  
 The Guelfs were shown alike, men ranged with men,  
 And deed with deed, blaze, blood, with blood and  
 blazé,

Morn broke : once more, Sordello, meet its gaze 910

Proudly—the people's charge against thee fails

In every point, while either party quails !

These are the busy ones—he silent thou !

Two parties take the world up, and allow

No third, yet have one principle, subsist 915

By the same method ; whoso shall enlist

With either, ranks with man's inveterate foes.

So there is one less quarrel to compose

'Twixt us : the Guelf's, the Ghibellin's to curse—

I have done nothing, but both sides do worse 920

Than nothing ; nay to me, forgotten, left

Of insight, lapped by trees and flowers, was left

The notion of a service—ha ? What lured

Me here, what mighty aim was I assured

Moved Salinguerra ? What a Cause remained 925

Intact, distinct from these, and fate ordained,

For all the past, that Cause for me ?

One pressed

Before them here, a watcher, to suggest

The subject for a ballad : He must know

The tale of the dead worthy, long ago 930

Consul of Rome—that's long ago for us,

Minstrels and bowmen, idly squabbling thus

In the world's corners—but too late, no doubt,

For the brave time he sought to bring about

—Not know Crescentius Nomentanus ? Then 935

He cast about for terms to tell him, when

Sordello disavowed it, how they used

Whenever their Superior introduced  
 A novice to the Brotherhood—(for I  
 Was just a brown-sleeve brother, merrily 940  
 Appointed too, quoth he, till Innocent  
 Bade me relinquish, to my small content,  
 My wife or my brown sleeves) out some one spoke  
 Ere nocturns of Crescentius, to revoke  
 The edict issued after his demise 945  
 That blotted memory, and effigies,  
 All out except a floating power, a name  
 Including, tending to produce the same  
 Great act. Rome, dead, forgotten, lived at least  
 Within that man, though to a vulgar priest 950  
 And a vile stranger, fit to be a slave  
 Of Rome's, Pope John, King Otho, fortune gave  
 The rule there : but Crescentius, haply drest  
 In white, called Roman Consul for a jest,  
 Taking the people at their word, forth stept 955  
 As upon Brutus' heel, nor ever kept  
 Us waiting ; stept he forth and from his brain  
 Gave Rome out on its ancient place again,  
 Ay, bade proceed with Brutus' Rome kings styled  
 Themselves the citizens of, and, beguiled 960  
 Thereby, were fain select the lustrous gem  
 Out of a lapfull, spoil their diadem  
 —The Senate's cypher was 'o hard to scratch !  
 He' flashes like a phanal, men too catch  
 The flame, and Rome's accomplished ; when  
 returned 965  
 Otho and John the Consul's step had spurned,  
 And Hugo Lord of Este, to redress  
 The wrongs of each. Crescentius in the stress  
 Of adverse fortune bent. They crucified  
 Their Consul in the Forum and abide 970  
 Such slaves at Rome e'er since, that I—(for I  
 Was once a brown-sleeve brother, merrily

Appointed)—I had option to keep wife  
 Or keep brown sleeves, and managed in the strife  
 Lose both. A song of Rome !

And Rome, indeed, 975

Robed at Goito in fantastic weed,  
 The Mother-City of his Mantuan days,  
 Looked an established point of light whence rays  
 Traversed the world; and all the clustered homes  
 Beside of men were bent on being Romes 980  
 In their degree; the question was how each  
 Should most resemble Rome, clean out of reach  
 Herself; nor struggled either principle  
 To change what it aspired possess—Rome, still  
 For Friedrich or Honorius.

Rome's the Cause ! 985

The Rome of the old Pandects, our new laws—  
 The Capitol turned Castle Angelo  
 And structures that inordinately glow  
 Corrected by the Theatre forlorn  
 As a black mundane shell, its world late born 990  
 —Verona, that's beside it. These combined,  
 We typify the scheme to put mankind  
 Once more in full possession of their rights  
 By his sole agency. On me it lights  
 To build up Rome again—me, first and last : 995  
 For such a Future was endured the Past !  
 And thus in the grey twilight forth he sprung  
 To give his thought consistency among  
 The People's self, and let their truth avail  
 Finish the dream grown from the archer's tale. 1000

## BOOK THE FIFTH.

Is it the same Sordello in the dusk  
 As at the dawn? merely a perished husk  
 Now, that arose a power like to build  
 Up Rome again? The proud conception chilled  
 So soon? Ay, watch that latest dream of thine 5  
 —A Rome indebted to no Palatine,  
 Drop arch by arch, Sordello! Art possess  
 Of thy wish now—rewarded for thy quest  
 To-day among Ferrara's squalid sons—  
 Are this and this and this the shining ones 10  
 Meet for the Shining City? Sooth to say  
 Our favoured tenantry pursue their way  
 After a fashion! This companion slips  
 On the smooth causey, t'other blinkard trips  
 At his mooned sandal. Leave to lead the brawls 15  
 Here i' the atria? No, friend. He that sprawls  
 On aught but a stibadium suffers . . . goose,  
 Puttest our lustral vase to such an use?  
 Oh, huddle up the day's disasters—march  
 Ye runagates, and drop thou, arch by arch, 20  
 Rome!

Yet before they quite disband—a whim—  
 Study a shelter, now, for him, and him,  
 Nay, even him, to house them! any cave  
 Suffices—throw out earth. A loophole? Brave!  
 They ask to feel the sun shine, see the grass 25  
 Grow, hear the larks sing? Dead art thou, alas,

And I am dead ! But here's our son excels  
 At hurdle-weaving any Scythian, fells  
 Oak and devises rafters, dreams and shapes  
 That dream into a door-post, just escapes 30  
 The mystery of hinges. Lie we both  
 Perdue another age. The goodly growth  
 Of brick and stone ! Our building-pelt was rough,  
 But that descendant's garb suits well enough  
 A portico-contriver. Speed the years— 35  
 What's time to us ? and lo, a city rears  
 Itself ! nay, enter—what's the grave to us ?  
 So, our forlorn acquaintance carry thus  
 The head ! successively sewer, forum, cirque—  
 Last age that aqueduct was counted work, 40  
 And now they tire the artificer upon  
 Blank alabaster, black obdion,  
 —Careful Jove's face be duly fulgorant,  
 And mother Venus' kiss-creased nipples pant  
 Back into pristine pulpiness, ere fixed 45  
 Above the baths. What difference betwixt  
 This Rome and ours ? Resemblance what between  
 The scurvy dumb-show and the pageant sheen—  
 These Romans and our rabble ? Rest thy wit  
 And listen : step by step,—a workman fit 50  
 With each, nor too fit,—to one's task, one's time,—  
 No leaping o'er the petty to the prime,  
 When just the substituting osier lithe  
 For bulrushes, and after, wood for withe  
 To further loam and roughcast work a stage, 55  
 Exacts an architect, exacts an age,—  
 Nor tables of the Mauritanian tree  
 For men whose maple log's their luxury,—  
 And Rome's accomplished ! Better (say you) merge  
 At once all workmen in the demiurge, 60  
 All epochs in a life-time, and all tasks  
 In one : undoubtedly the city basks

I' the day—while those you'd feast there want the  
knack

Of keeping fresh-chalked gowns from speck and brack,  
Distinguish not your peacock from your swan, 65

Or Mareot's juice from Cæcuban,

Nay sneer . . . enough ! 'twas happy to conceive

Rome on a sudden, nor shall fate bereave

Us of that credit : for the rest, her spite

Is an old story—serves us very right 70

For adding yet another to the dull

List of devices—things proved beautiful

Could they be done, Sordello cannot do.

He sate upon the terrace, plucked and threw

The powdery aloe-cusps away, saw shift 75

Rome's walls, and drop arch after arch, and drift

Mist-like afar those pillars of all stripe,

Mounds of all majesty. Thou archetype,

Last of my dreams and loveliest, depart !

And then a low voice wound into his heart : 80

Sordello (lower than a Pythoness

Conceding to a Lydian King's distress

The cause of his long error—one mistake

Of her past oracle) Sordello, wake !

Where is the vanity ? Why count you, one 85

The first step with the last step ? What is gone

Except that æry magnificence—

That last step you took first ? an evidence

You were . . . no matter. Let those glances fall !

This basis, this beginning step of all, 90

Which proves you one of us, is this gone too ?

Pity to disconcert one versed as you

In fate's ill-nature, but its full extent

Eludes Sordello, even : the veil's rent,

Read the black writing—that collective man 95

Outstrips the individual ! Who began

The greatneses you know ?—ay, your own art

Shall serve us : put the poet's mimes apart—  
 Close with the poet—closer—what ? a dim  
 Too plain form separates itself from him ? 100  
 Alcama's song enmeshes the lulled Isle,  
 Woven into the echoes left erewhile  
 Of Nina's, one soft web of song : no more  
 Turning his name, flower-like o'er and o'er !  
 An elder poet in the younger's place— 105  
 Take Nina's strength—but lose Alcama's grace ?  
 Each neutralizes each then ! gaze your fill ;  
 Search further and the past presents you still  
 New Ninas, new Alcamas, time's mid-night  
 Concluding,—better say its evenlight 110  
 Of yesterday. You now, in this respect  
 Of benefitting people (to reject  
 The favour of your fearful ignorance  
 A thousand phantasms eager to advance,  
 Refer you but to those within your reach) 115  
 Were you the first who got, to use plain speech,  
 The Multitude to be materialized ?  
 That loose eternal unrest—who devised  
 An apparition i' the midst ? the rout  
 Who checked, the breathless ring who formed about 120  
 That sudden flower ? Get round at any risk  
 The gold-rough pointel, silver-blazing disk  
 O' the lily ! Swords across it ! Reign thy reign  
 And serve thy frolic service, Charlemagne !  
 —The very child of over-joyousness, 125  
 Unfeeling thence, strong therefore . Strength by stress  
 Of Strength comes of a forehead confident,  
 Two widened eyes expecting heart's content,  
 A calm as out of just-quelled noise, nor swerves  
 The ample cheek for doubt, in gracious curves 130  
 Abutting on the upthrust nether lip—  
 He wills, how should he doubt then ? Ages slip—  
 Was it Sordello pried into the work



So far accomplished, and discovering lurk  
 A company amid the other clans, 135  
 Only distinct in priests for castellans  
 And popes for suzerains (their rule confessed  
 Its rule, its interest its interest,  
 Living for sake of living—there an end,  
 Wrapt in itself, no energy to spend 140  
 In making adversaries or allies);  
 Dived he into its capabilities  
 And dared create out of that sect a soul  
 Should turn the multitude, already whole,  
 To some account? Speak plainer! Is't so sure 145  
 God's church lives by a King's investiture?  
 Look to last step: a staggering—a shock—  
 What's sand shall be demolished, but the rock  
 Endures—a column of black fiery dust  
 Blots heaven—woe, woe, 'tis prematurely thrust 150  
 Aside, that step!—the air clears—nought's erased  
 Of the true outline? Thus much is firm based—  
 The other was a scaffold: see you stand  
 Buttressed upon his mattock Hildebrand  
 Of the huge brain-mask welded ply o'er ply 155  
 As in a forge; it buries either eye  
 White and extinct, that stupid brow; teeth clenched,  
 The neck's tight-corded, too, the chin deep-trenched,  
 As if a cloud enveloped him while fought  
 Under it all, grim prizers, thought with thought 160  
 At dead-lock, agonizing he, until  
 The victor thought leap radiant up, and Will,  
 The slave with folded arms and drooping lids  
 They fought for, lean forth flame-like as it bids.  
 —A root, the crippled mandrake of the earth, 165  
 Thwarted and dwarfed and blasted in its birth,  
 Be certain; fruit of suffering's excess,  
 Whence feeling, therefore stronger: still by stress  
 Of Strength, work Knowledge! Full three hundred years

For men to wear away in smiles and tears 170  
 Between the two that nearly seem to touch,  
 Observe you : quit one workman and we clutch  
 Another, letting both their trains go by—  
 The actors-out of either's policy,  
 Heinrich, on this hand, Otho, Barlmross, 175  
 May carry the Imperial crowns across,  
 Aix' Iron, Milan's Silver, and Rome's Gold—  
 As Alexander, Innocent uphold  
 On that the Papal keys—but, link on link,  
 Why is it neither chain betrays a chink? 180  
 How coalesce the small and great? Alack,  
 For one thrust forward, fifty such fall back !  
 The couple there alone help Gregory  
 Hark—from the hermit Peter's thin sad cry  
 At Claremont, yonder to the serf that says 185  
 Friedrich's no liege of his while he delays  
 Getting the Pope's curse off him ! The Crusade—  
 Or trick of breeding strength by other aid  
 Than strength, is safe : hark—from the wild harangue  
 Of Vimmercato, to the carroch's clang 190  
 Yonder ! The League—or trick of turning strength  
 Against pernicious strength, is safe at length :  
 Yet hark—from Mantuan Albert's making cease  
 The fierce ones, to Saint Francis preaching peace  
 Yonder ! God's Truce—or trick to supersede 195  
 The use of strength at all, is safe. Indeed  
 We trench upon the future ! Who shall found  
 Next step, next age—trail plenteous o'er the ground  
 Vine-like, produced by joy and sorrow, whence  
 Unfeeling and yet feeling, strongest thence : 200  
 Knowledge by stress of Knowledge is it? No—  
 E'en were Sordello ready to forego  
 His work for this, 'twere overleaping work  
 Some one must do before, howe'er it irk :  
 No end's in sight yet of that second road : 205

Who means to help must still support the load  
Hildebrand lifted—why hast Thou, he groaned,  
Imposed, my God, a thing thy Paul had moaned,  
And Moses failed beneath, on me? and yet  
That grandest of the tasks God ever set 210  
On man left much to do: a mighty wrench—  
The scaffold falls—but half the pillars blench  
Merely, start back again—perchance have been  
Taken for buttresses: crash every screen,  
Hammer the tenons better, and engage 215  
A gang about your work, for the next age  
Or two, of Knowledge, part by Strength and part  
By Knowledge! then—ay, then perchance may start  
Sordello on his race—but who'll divulge  
Time's secrets? lo, a step's awry, a bulge 220  
To be corrected by a step we thought  
Got over long ago—till that is wrought,  
No progress! and that scaffold in its turn  
Becomes, its service o'er, a thing to spurn.  
Meanwhile, your some half-dozen years of life 225  
Longer, dispose you to forego the strife—  
Who takes exception? 'Tis Ferrara, mind,  
Before us, and Goito's left behind:  
As you then were, as half yourself, desist!  
—The warrior-part of you may, an it list, 230  
Finding real faulchions difficult to poise,  
Fling them afar and taste the cream of joys  
By wielding one in fancy,—what is bard  
Of you, may spurn the vehicle that marred  
Elys so much, and in mere fancy glut 235  
His sense on her free beauties—we have but  
To please ourselves for law, and you could please  
What then appeared yourself by dreaming these  
Rather than doing these: now, fancy's trade  
Is ended, mind, nor one half may evade 240  
The other half: our friends are half of you:

Out of a thousand helps, just one or two  
 Can be accomplished presently - but flinch  
 From these (as from the faulchion raised an inch,  
 Elys described a couplet) and make proof 245  
 Of fancy,—and while one half lolls about  
 O' the grass, completing Rome to the tip-top -  
 See if, for that, the other half will stop  
 A tear, begin a smile: that rabble's woes,  
 Ludicrous in their patience as they chose 250  
 To sit about their town and quietly  
 Be slaughtered,—the poor reckless soldiery,  
 With their ignoble rhymes on Richard, how  
 Polt-foot, sang they, was in a pitfall now,  
 Cheering each other from the engine-mounts,— 255  
 That crippled sprawling idiot who recounts  
 How, lopt of limbs, he lay, stupid as stone,  
 Till the pains crept from out him one by one,  
 And wriggles round the archers on his head  
 To earn a morsel of their chesnut bread, -- 260  
 And Cino, always in the self-same place  
 Weeping; beside that other wretch's case  
 Eyepits to ear one gangrene since he plied  
 The engine in his coat of raw sheep's hide  
 A double watch in the noon sun; and see 265  
 Lucchino, beauty, with the favors free,  
 Trim hacqueton, and sprucely scented hair,  
 Campaigning it for the first time—cut their  
 In two already, boy enough to crawl  
 For latter orpine round the Southern wall, 270  
 Tomà, where Richard's kept, because that whore  
 Marfisa the fool never saw before  
 Sickened for flowers this wearisomest siege:  
 Then Tiso's wife—men liked their pretty hege,  
 Cared for her least of whims once, Berta, well 275  
 A twelvemonth goue, and, now poor Tiso's dead,  
 Delivering herself of his first child

On that chance heap of wet filth, reconciled  
 To fifty gazers. (Here a wind below  
 Made bloody music augural of woe 280  
 From the pine barrier)—What if, now the scene  
 Draws to shutting, if yourself have been  
 —You, plucking purples in Goito's moss  
 Like edges of a trialea (not to cross  
 Your consul-feeling) or dry aloe-shafts 285  
 Here at Ferrara—He whom fortune wasts,  
 This very age her best inheritance  
 Of opportunities? Yet we advance  
 Upon the last! Since talking is your trade,  
 There's Salmagueria left you to persuade, 290  
 And then—

No—no—which latest chance secure!  
 Leapt up and cried Sordello: this made sure,  
 The Past is yet redeemable whose work  
 Was—help the Guelfs, and I, how'er it irk,  
 Thus help! He shook the foolish aloe-haulm 295  
 Out of his doublet, paused, proceeded calm  
 To the appointed presence. The large head  
 Turned on its socket: And your spokesman, said  
 The large voice, is Elcorte's happy sprout?  
 Few such—(so finishing a speech no doubt 300  
 Addressed to Palma, silent at his side)  
 Our sober councils have diversified:  
 Elcorte's son! but forward as you may,  
 Our lady's minstrel with so much to say!  
 The hesitating sunset floated back, 305  
 Rosily traversed in a single track  
 The chamber, from the lattice o'er the girth  
 Of pines to the huge eagle blacked in earth  
 Opposite, outlined sudden, spur to crest,  
 That solid Salmagueria, and caressed 310  
 Polina's contour; 'twas Day looped back Night's  
 pall;

Sordello had a chance left spite of all.

And much he made of the convincing speech  
He meant should compensate the Past and teach  
Through his youth's daybreak of unprofit, quite 315

To his noon's labour, so proceed till night  
At leisure ! The contrivances to bind  
Taurello body with the Cause and mind,

—Was the consummate rhetoric just that ?  
Yet most Sordello's argument dropped flat 320

Through his accustomed fault of breaking yoke,  
Disjoining him who felt from him who spoke .

Was 't not a touching incident - -so prompt  
A rendering the world its just account

Once proved its debtor ? Who'd suppose before 325  
This proof that he, Goto's God of yore,

At duty's instance could demean himself  
So memorably, dwindle to a Gueff ?

Be sure, in such delicious flattery steeped,  
His inmost self at the out-portion peeped 330

Thus occupied ; then stole a glance at those  
Appealed to, curious if her colour rose

Or his lip moved, while he discreetly urged  
The need of Lombardy's becoming purged

At soonest of her barons ; the poor part 335  
Abandoned thus missing the blood at heart,

Spirit in brain, unseasonably off  
Elsewhere ! But, though his speech was worthy scoff,

Good-humoured Salinguerra, famed for tact  
That way, who, careless of his phrase, ne'er

lacked 340  
The right phrase, and harangued Honorius dumb

At his accession, looked as all fell plumb

To purpose and himself took interest

In every point his new instructor pressed  
—Left playing with the rescript's white wax seal 345

To scrutinize Sordello head and heel :

Then means he . . . yes assent sure? Well? alas,  
 'He said no more than, So it comes to pass  
 That jocosy, sooner than politics,  
 Makes the young hair . . . to think such speech could  
     fix 350  
 Taurello.

Then a flash; he knew the truth:  
 So fantasies shall break and fitter youth  
 That he has long ago lost earnestness,  
 Lost will to work, lost power to express  
 Even the need of working! Ere the grave 355  
 No more occasions now, though he should crave  
 One such, in right of superhuman toil  
 To do what was undone, repair his spoil,  
 Alter the Past—nought brings again the chance!  
 Not that he was to die: he saw askance 360  
 Protract the ignominious years beyond  
 To dream in—time to hope and time despond,  
 Remember and forget, be sad, rejoice  
 As saved a trouble, suited to his choice,  
 One way or other—idle life out, drop 365  
 No few smooth verses by the way—for prop  
 A thyrus these sad people should, the same,  
 Pick up, set store by, and, so far from blame,  
 Plant 'till his hearse convinced his heart a part  
 Survived him. Rather to men out the heart 370  
 Of the truth! Sordello muttered, and renewed  
 His propositions for the Multitude

But Salanguerra who, the last attack,  
 Threw himself in his ruffling corslet back  
 To hear the better, smilingly resumed 375  
 Some task; beneath the carroch's warning boomed;  
 He must decide with Tho; courteously  
 He turned then, even seeming to agree  
 With his admonisher—Assist the Pop  
 Extend his domination, fill the scope 380

O' the Church based on All, by All, for All—  
 Change Secular to Evangelical—  
 Echoing his very sentence . all seemed lost,  
 When sudden he looked, laughingly almost,  
 To Palma: This opinion of your friend's 385  
 For instance, would it answer Palma's ends?  
 Best, were it not, turn Guelf, submit our Strength  
 (Here he drew out his baldric to its length)  
 To the Pope's Knowledge—let our King Richard slip,  
 Wide to the walls throw ope your gates, equip 390  
 Azza with . . . but no matter! We'll sub-cubie  
 To a tite censure of the minstrel tribe  
 Henceforward? or pronounce, as Heinrich used,  
 "Spear-heads for battle, butt heads for the joust!"  
 —When Constance, for his couplets, would promote 395  
 Alcama, from a puti coloured coat  
 To holding her lord's stirrup in the wars.  
 Not that I see where couplet-making jar,  
 With common sense: at Mantua we had borne  
 This chanted, easier than their most forlorn 400  
 Of bull fights, —that's indisputable!

Brave!

Whom vanity nigh slew, contempt shall save!  
 All's at an end: a Troubadour suppose  
 Mankind's to class him with their friends or foes?  
 A puny uncouth ruling vassal think 405  
 The world and him in some especial link?  
 Abrupt the visionary tether's burst—  
 What's to reward or what to be amerced  
 If a poor drodge, solicitous to dream  
 Deservingly, gets tangled by his theme 410  
 So far as to conceit his knack or gift  
 Or whatsoever it be of verse might lift  
 The globe, a lever like the hand and head  
 Of—Men of Action, as the Jongleurs call,  
 —The Great Men, in the people's dialect? 415



And not a moment did this scorn affect  
 Sordello: scorn the poet? They, for once,  
 Asking "what was," obtained a full response.  
 Bid Naldo think at Mantua, he had but  
 To look into his promptuary, put 420  
 His hand on a set thought in a set speech:  
 And was Sordello fitted thus for each  
 Conjuncture? No wise; since within his soul  
 Perception brooded unexpressed and whole.  
 A healthy spirit like a healthy frame 425  
 Craves aliment in plenty and, the same,  
 Changes, assimilates its aliment:  
 Perceived Sordello, on a truth intent?  
 Next day no formularies more you saw  
 Than figs or olives in a sated maw 430  
 — 'Tis Knowledge, whither such perceptions tend,  
 They lose themselves in that, means to an end,  
 The Many Old producing some One New,  
 A Last unlike the First. If lies are true,  
 The Caliph Haroun's man of brass receives 435  
 A meal, ay, millet grains and lettuce leaves  
 Together in his stomach rattle loose—  
 You find them perfect next day to produce  
 But ne'er expect the man, on strength of that,  
 Can roll an iron camel collar flat 440  
 Like Haroun's self! I tell you, what was stored  
 Parcel by parcel through his life, outpoured  
 That eve, was, for that age, a novel thing:  
 And round those three the People formed a ring,  
 Suspended their own vengeance, chose await 445  
 The issue of this strife to renslate  
 Them in the right of taking it—in fact  
 He must be proved their lord ere they exact  
 Amends for that lord's defalcation. Last,  
 A reason why the phrases flowed so fast 450  
 Was in his quite forgetting for the time

Himself in his amazement that his rhyme  
 Disguised the royalty so much: he there —  
 They full face to him—and yet unaware  
 Who was the King and who . . . But if I lay 455  
 On thine my spirit and compel obey  
 His lord—Taurilio? Impotent to build  
 Another Rome, but hardly so unskilled  
 In what such builder should have been a brook  
 One shame beyond the charge that he forsook 460  
 His function! Set me free that shame I bend  
 A brow before, suppose new years to spend,  
 Allow each chance, nor fruitlessly, recur —  
 Measure thee with the Minstrel, the *va. demur*  
 At any crown he claims! That I must cede 465  
 As 'tis my right to my especial need—  
 Confess you hither help the world to end I  
 Ordained its champion from eternity  
 Is much: but to behold you scorn the post  
 I quit in your behalf—as ought's to boast 470  
 Unless you help the world! And while he sung  
 The changes on this theme, the roof up sprung,  
 The sad walls of the presence-chamber died  
 Into the distance, or embowering vied  
 With far-away Goito's vine frontier; 475  
 And crowds of faces (only keeping clear  
 The rose-light in the midst, his vantage-ground  
 To fight their battle from) deep clustered round  
 Sordello, with good wishes no mere breath,  
 Kind prayers for him no vapour, since, come death, 480  
 Come life, he was fresh-sinewed every joint,  
 Each bone new-marrowed as whom Gods anoint  
 Though mortal to their rescue: now let sprawl  
 The snaky volumes hither, Typhon's all  
 For Hercules to trample—good report 485  
 From Salinguerra's only to extort?  
 So was I (closed he his inculcating

A poet must be earth's essential king)  
 So was I, royal so, and if I fail  
 'Tis not the royalty ye witness quail 490  
 But one deposed who, caring not event  
 Its proper essence, trifled malapert  
 With accidents instead—good things assigned  
 The herald of a better thing behind—  
 And, worthy through display of these, put forth 495  
 Never the inmost all-surpassing worth  
 That constitutes him King precisely since  
 As yet no other creature may evince  
 Its like: the power he took most pride to test,  
 Whereby all forms of life had been professed 500  
 At pleasure, forms already on the earth,  
 Was but a means to power whose novel birth  
 Should, in its novelty, be kingship's proof—  
 Now, whether he came near or kept aloof,  
 Those forms unalterable first to last 505  
 Proved him her copy, not the protoplast  
 Of Nature: what would come of being free  
 By action to exhibit tree for tree,  
 Bird, beast for beast and bird, or prove earth bore  
 A veritable man or woman more? 510  
 Means to an end, such proofs; and what the end?  
 Your essence, whatsoe'er it be, extend—  
 Never contract! Already you include  
 The multitude; now let the multitude  
 Include yourself, and the result is new; 515  
 Themselves before, the multitude turn you;  
 This were to live and move and have (in them)  
 Your being, and secure a diadem  
 That's to transmit (because no cycle yearns  
 Beyond itself, but on itself returns) 520  
 When the full sphere in wane, the world o'erlaid  
 Long since with you, shall have in turn obeyed  
 Some orb still prouder, some displayer, still

More potent than the last, of human Will,  
 And some new King depose the old. Of such 525  
 Am I—whom pride of this elates too much?  
 Safe, rather say, mid troops of peers again;  
 I, with my words, hailed brother of the train  
 Once deeds sufficed: for, let the world roll back,  
 Who fails, through deeds diverse soe'er, re-track 530  
 My purpose still, my task? A teenning crust—  
 Air, flame, earth, wave at conflict—see! Needs must  
 Emerge some Calm embodied these refer  
 (Saturn—no ' yellow-bearded Jupiter?)  
 The brawl to; some existence like a part 535  
 And protest against Chaos, some first fact  
 I' the faint of Time . . my deep of life, I know,  
 Is unavailing e'en to poorly show  
 (For here the Chief immeasurably yawned)  
 Deeds in their due gradation till Song dawned— 540  
 The fullest effluence of the finest mind  
 All in degree, no way diverse in kind  
 From those about us, minds which, more or less,  
 Lofty or low, in moving seek impress  
 Themselves on somewhat; but one mind has  
 climbed 545  
 Step after step, by just ascent sublimed:  
 Thought is the soul et act, and stage by stage,  
 Is soul from body still to disengage  
 As tending to a freedom which rejects  
 Such help and incorporeally affects 550  
 The world, producing deeds but not by deeds,  
 Swaying, in others, frames itself exceeds,  
 Assigning them the simpler tasks it used  
 As patiently perform till Song produced  
 Acts, by thoughts only, for the mind . divest 555  
 Mind of e'en Thought, and, lo, God's unexpressed  
 Will dawns above us. But so much to win  
 Ere that. A lesser round of steps within

The last. About me, faces! and they flock,  
 The earnest faces. What shall I unlock 560  
 By song? behold me prompt, whate'er it be,  
 To minister: how much can mortals see  
 Of Life? No more? I covet the first task  
 And man! al you Life's elemental Masque  
 Show Mea, on evil or on good lay stress, 565  
 This light, this shade make prominent, suppress  
 All ordinary hues that softening blend  
 Such natures with the level: apprehend  
 Which evil is, which good, if I allot  
 Your Hell, the Purgatory, Heaven ye wot, 570  
 To those you doubt concerning: I enwomb  
 Some wretched Friedrich with his red-hot tomb,  
 Some dubious spirit, Lombard Agilulph  
 With the black chastening river I engulph;  
 Some unapproached Matilda I enshrine 575  
 With languors of the planet of decline—  
 These fail to recognise, to arbitrate  
 Between henceforth, to rightly estimate  
 Thus marshalled in the Masque! Myself, the while,  
 As one of you, am witness, shrink or smile 580  
 At my own showing! Next age—what's to do?  
 The men and women stationed hitherto  
 Will I unstation, good and bad, conduct  
 Each nature to its farthest or obstruct  
 At soonest in the world: Light, thwarted, breaks 585  
 A limpid purity to rainbow flakes,  
 Or Shadow, helped, freezes to gloom: behold  
 How such, with fit assistance to unfold,  
 Or obstacles to crush them, disengage  
 Their forms, love, hate, hope, fear, peace make, war  
 wage, 590  
 In presence of you all! Myself implied  
 Superior now, as, by the platform's side,  
 Bidding them do and suffer to content

The world . . . no—that I wist not—circumvent  
 A few it has contented, and to these 595  
 Offer unveil the last of mysteries  
 I boast! Man's life shall have yet freer play:  
 Once more I cast external things away  
 And Natures, varied now, so decompose  
 That . . . but enough! Why fancy how I rose, 600  
 Or rather you advanced since even more  
 Yourselves effect what I was fain before  
 Effect, what I supplied yourselves suggest,  
 What I leave bare yourselves can now invest?  
 How we attained to talk as brothers talk, 605  
 In half-words, call things by half-names, no half  
 From discontinuing old aids—To-day  
 Takes in account the work of Yesterday—  
 Has not the world a Past now, its adept  
 Consults ere he dispense with or accept 610  
 New aids? a single touch more may enhance,  
 A touch less turn to insignificance  
 Those structures' symmetry the Past has strewed  
 The world with, once so bare: leave the mere rude  
 Explicit details, 'tis but brother's speech 615  
 We need, speech where an accent's change gives each  
 The other's soul—no speech to understand  
 By former audience—need was then expand,  
 Expatiate—hardly were they brothers' true—  
 Nor I lament my less remove from you, 620  
 Nor reconstruct what stands already. ends  
 Accomplished turn to means: my art intends  
 New structure from the ancient: as they charmed  
 The spoils of every clime at Venice, ranged  
 The horned and snouted Libyan god, upright . 625  
 As in his desert, by some simple bright  
 Clay cinerary pitcher—Thebes as Rome,  
 Athens as Byzant rifled, till their Dome  
 From Earth's reputed consummations razed

A seal the all-transmuting Triad blazed 630  
 Above. Ah, whose that fortune? ne'ertheless  
 F'en he must stoop contented to express  
 No title of what's to say—the vehicle  
 Never sufficient—but his work is still  
 For faces like the faces that select 635  
 The single service I am bound effect  
 Nor murmur, bid me, still as poet, bow  
 Taurello to the Guelf cause, disallow  
 The Kaiser's coming—which with heart, soul, strength,  
 I labour for, this eve, who feel at length 640  
 My past career's outrageous vanity  
 And would (as vain amends) die, even die  
 Now I first estimate the boon of life,  
 So death might! how Taurello—sure this strife  
 Is the last strife—the People my support 645  
 My poor Sordello! what may we expect  
 By this, I wonder? Palma's lighted eyes  
 Turned to Taurello who, long past surprise,  
 Began, You love him—what you'd say at large  
 If I say briefly? First, your father's charge 650  
 To me, his friend, peruse. I guessed indeed  
 You were no stranger to the coarse decreed  
 Us both. I leave his children to the saint:  
 As for a certain project, he acquaints  
 The Pope with that, and offers him the rest 655  
 Of your possessions to permit the rest  
 Go peaceably—to Eichen, a stripe  
 Of soil the cursed Vicentines will gripe,  
 —To Albene, a patch the Trevisan  
 Clutches already; extricate who can 660  
 Treville, Villavazzi, Piuol,   
 Cartiglione, Loria—all go,  
 And with them go my hopes! 'Tis lost, then! Lost  
 This eve, our crisis, and some pains it cost  
 Procuring; thirty years—as good I'd spent 665

Like our admonisher ! But each his bent  
 Pursues—no question, one might live absurd  
 Oneself this while, by deed as he by word,  
 Persisting to obtrude an influence where  
 'Tis made account of much as . . . nay, you fare 670  
 With twice the fortune, youngster— I submit,  
 Happy to parallel my waste of wit  
 With the renowned Sordello's—you decide  
 A course for me—Romano may abide  
 Romano,—Bacchus ! Who'd suppose the dearth 675  
 Of Ecceius and Albenes on earth ?  
 Say there's a prize in prospect, must disgrace  
 Betide competitors ? An obscure place  
 Suits me—there wants youth, but 'tis one to stalk  
 And attitudinize—some fight, more talk, 680  
 Most flunting badges—twere not hard make clear  
 Since Friedrich's very proposes he here  
 --Here- pity they are like to be ! For me,  
 Whose station's fixed unceremoniously  
 Long since, small use contesting ; I am but 685  
 The hegeman, you are born the heges—slut  
 That gentle mouth now !—or resume your kin  
 In your sweet self, Palma vere Lachin  
 For me and welcome ! Could that neck endure  
 This bumble for a cumbersome gruntnure 690  
 You should . . . or might one bear it for you ? Stay -  
 I have not been so flattered many a day  
 As by your pale friend—Bacchus ! The least rep  
 Would lick the hind's fawn to a lion's whelp—  
 His neck is broad enough—a ready tongue 695  
 Beside—too writhled—but, the main thing, you ang—  
 I could . . . why look ye !

And the badge was thrown  
 Across Sordello's neck : this badge alone  
 Makes you Romano's Head—the Lombard's curb  
 Turns on your neck which would, on mine, disturb 700



My pauldron, said Taurello. A mad act,  
 Nor dreamed about a moment since—in fact  
 Not when his sportive arm rose for the nonce—  
 But he had dallied overmuch, this once,  
 With power: the thing was done, and he, aware 705  
 The thing was done, proceeded to declare  
 (So like a nature made to serve, excel  
 In serving, only feel by service well)  
 That he should make him all he said and more :  
 . As good a scheme as any: what's to pore 710  
 At in my face? he asked—ponder instead  
 This piece of news; you are Romano's Head—  
 You cannot slacken pace so near the goal,  
 Suffer my Azro to escape heart-whole  
 This time! For you there's Palma to espouse— 715  
 For me, one crowning trouble ere I house  
 Like my compeer.

On which ensued a strange  
 And solemn visitation—mighty change  
 O'er every one of them—each looked on each—  
 Up in the midst a truth grew, without speech, 720  
 And when the giddiness sank and the haze  
 Subsided, they were sitting, no amaze,  
 Sordello with the baldric on, his sire  
 Silent though his proportions seemed aspire  
 Momently; and, interpreting, the thrill 725  
 Night at its ebb, Palma you found was still  
 Relating somewhat Adelaide confessed  
 A year ago, while dying on her breast,  
 Of a contrivance that Vicenza night,  
 Her Ecelin had birth: their convoy's flight 730  
 Cut off a moment, coiled inside the flame  
 That wallowed like a dragon at his game  
 The toppling city through— San Biagio rocks!  
 And wounded lies in her delicious locks  
 Retrude, the frail mother, on her face, 735

None of her wasted, just in one embrace  
 Covering her child : when, as they lifted her,  
 Cleaving the tumult, mighty, mightier  
 And mightiest Taurello's cry outbroke,  
 Leapt like a tongue of fire that cleaves the smoke, 740  
 Midmost to cheer his Mantuans onward—down  
 His colleague's clamour, Ecelin's up, down  
 The disarray : failed Adelaide see then  
 Who was the natural Chief, the Man of Men ?  
 Outstripping time her Ecelin burst swathe, 745  
 Stood up with eyes haggard beyond the scathe  
 From wandering after his heritage  
 Lost once and lost for aye—what could engage  
 That deprecating glance ? A new Shape leant  
 On a familiar Shape—gloatingly bent 750  
 O'er his discomfiture ; 'mid wreaths it wore,  
 Still one outflamed the rest—her child's before  
 'Twas Salinguerra's for his child : scorn, hate  
 Rage startled her from Ecelin—too late !  
 A moment's work, and rival's foot had spurned 755  
 Never that brow to earth ! Ere sense returned—  
 The act conceived, adventured, and complete,  
 They stole away towards an obscure retreat  
 Mother and child—Retrude's self not slain  
 (Nor even here Taurello moved) though pain 760  
 Was fled ; and what assured them most 'twas fled,  
 All pain, was, if you raised the pale hushed head  
 'Twould turn this way and that, waver awhile,  
 And only settle into its old smile  
 (Graceful as the disquieted water-flag 765  
 Steadying itself, remarked they, in the quag  
 On either side their path) when suffered look  
 Downward : they marched : no sign of life once shook  
 The company's close litter of crossed spears  
 Till, as they reached Goito, a few tears 770  
 Slipt in the sunset from her long black lash,

And she was gone. So far the action rash—  
 No crime. They laid Retrude in the font  
 Taurello's very gift, her child was wont  
 To sit beneath—constant as eve he came 775  
 To sit by the attendant girls the same  
 As one of them. For Palma, she would blend  
 With this magic spirit to the end  
 That ruled her first—but scarcely had she dared  
 To disobey the Adelaide who scared 780  
 Her into vowing never to disclose  
 A secret to her husband which so froze  
 His blood at half recital she contrived  
 To hide from him Taurello's infant lived  
 Lest, by revealing that, himself should mar 785  
 Romano's fortunes: and, a crime so far,  
 Palma received that action: she was told  
 Of Salinguerra's nature, and his cold  
 Calm acquiescence in his lot! But free  
 Impart the secret to Romano, she 790  
 Engaged to repossess Sordello of  
 His heritage, and hers, and that way doff  
 The mask, but after years, long years!—while now  
 Was not Romano's sign-mark on that brow?  
 Across Taurello's heart his arms were locked: 795  
 And 'twas when speak he did, as if he mocked  
 The minstrel, who had not to move, he said,  
 Nor stir—should Fate defraud him of a shred  
 Of this son's infancy? much less his youth  
 (Laughingly all this) which to aid, in truth, 800  
 Himself, reserved on purpose, had not grown  
 Old, not too old—'twas better keep alone  
 Till now, and never idly met till now:  
 —Then, in the same breath, told Sordello how  
 The intimations of this eve's event 805  
 Were futile —Friedrich means advance to Trent,  
 Thence to Verona, then to Rome—there stop—

Tumble the Church down, institute a-top  
 The Alps a Prefecture of Lombardy :  
 —That's now—no prophesying what may be 810  
 Anon, beneath a monarch of the clime,  
 Native of Gesi, passing his youth's prime  
 At Naples. Tito bids my choice decide  
 On whom . . .

Embrace him, madman ! Palma cried  
 Who through the laugh saw sweatdrops burst apace 815  
 And his lips' blanching : he did not embrace  
 Sordello, but he laid Sordello's hand  
 On his own eyes, mouth, forehead.

Understand,  
 This while Sordello was becoming flushed  
 Out of his whiteness ; thoughts rushed, fancies  
 rushed ; 820

He pressed his hand upon his head and signed  
 Both should forbear him. Nay, the best's behind !  
 Taurello laughed—not quite with the same laugh :  
 The truth is, thus you scatter, ay, like chaff  
 The Guelfs a despicable monk recoils 825

From—nor expect a fickle Kaiser spoils  
 Our triumph !—Friedrich ? Think you I intend  
 Friedrich shall reap the fruits of blood I spend  
 And brain I waste ? Think you the people clap  
 Their hands at my out-hewing this wild gap 830  
 For any Friedrich to fill up ? 'Tis mine—

That's yours : I tell you towards some such design  
 Have I worked blindly, yes, and idly, yes,  
 And for another, yes—but worked no less  
 With instinct at my heart ; I else had swerved, 835  
 While now—look round ! My cunning has preserved  
 Samminiato—that's a central place  
 Secures us Florence, boy, in Pisa's case  
 By land as she by sea ; with Pisa ours,  
 And Florence, and Pistoia, one devours 840

The land at leisure ! Gloriously dispersed—  
 Brescia, observe, Milan, Piacenza first  
 That flanked us (ah, you know not I) in the March ;  
 On these we pile, as keystone of our arch,  
 Romagna and Bologna, whose first span 845  
 Covered the Trentine and the Valsugan ;  
 Sofia's Egna by Bolgiato's sure . . .  
 So he proceeded. Half of all this pure  
 Delusion, doubtless, nor the rest too true,  
 But what was undone he felt sure to do 850  
 As ring by ring he wrung off, flung away  
 The pauldron-rings to give his sword-arm play—  
 Need of the sword now ! That would soon adjust  
 Aught wrong at present ; to the sword intrust  
 Sordello's whiteness, undersize ; 'twas plain 855  
 He hardly rendered right to his own brain—  
 Like a brave hound men educate to pride  
 Himself on speed or scent nor aught beside,  
 As though he could not, gift by gift, match men !  
 Palma had listened patiently : but when 860  
 'Twas time expostulate, attempt withdraw  
 Taurello from his child, she, without awe  
 Took off his iron arms from, one by one,  
 Sordello's shrinking shoulders, and, that done,  
 Made him avert his visage and relieve 865  
 Sordello (you might see his corslet heave  
 The while) who, loose, rose—tried to speak, then  
 sank :  
 They left him in the chamber—all was blank.  
 And even reeling down the castle-stair  
 Taurello kept up, as though unaware 870  
 Palma was guide to him, the old device  
 —Something of Milan—how we muster thrice  
 The Torriani's strength there—all along  
 Our own Visconti cowed them—thus the song  
 Continued even while she bade him stoop, 875

Thrid somehow, by some glimpse of arrow-loop,  
The turnings to the gallery below,  
Where he stopped short as Palma let him go.  
When he had sate in silence long enough  
Splintering the stone bench, braving a rebuff 880  
She stopt the truncheon ; only to commence  
One of Sordello's poems, a pretence  
For speaking, some poor rhyme of Elys' hair  
And head that's sharp and perfect like a pear,  
So smooth and close are laid the few fine locks 885  
Stained like pale honey cozed from topmost rocks  
Sun-blanced the livelong Summer—from his worst  
Performance, the Goito, as his first :  
And that at end, conceiving from the brow  
And open mouth no silence would serve now, 890  
Went on to say the whole world loved that man  
And, for that matter, thought his face, tho' wan,  
Eclipsed the Count's—he sucking in each phrase  
As if an angel spoke : the foolish praise  
Ended, he drew her on his mailed knees, made 895  
Her face a framework with his hands, a shade,  
A crown, an aureole—there must she remain  
(Her little mouth compressed with smiling pain  
As in his gloves she felt her tresses twitch)  
To get the best look at, in fittest niche 900  
Dispose his saint ; that done, he kissed her brow—  
Lauded her father for his treason now,  
He told her, only how could one suspect  
The wit in him ? whose clansman, recollect,  
Was ever Salinguerra—she, the same, 905  
Romano and his lady—so might claim  
To know all, as she should—and thus begun  
Schemes with a vengeance, schemes on schemes, not  
one  
Fit to be told that foolish boy, he said,  
But only let Sordello Palma wed, 910

--Then !

'Twas a dim long narrow place at best :  
 Midway a sole grate showed the fiery West  
 As shows its corpse the world's end some split tomb—  
 A gloom, a riot of fire, another gloom  
 Faced Palma—but at length Taurello set 915  
 Her free ; the grating held one ragged jet  
 Of fierce gold fire : he lifted her within  
 The hollow underneath—how else begin  
 Fate's second marvellous cycle, else renew  
 The ages than with Palma plain in view ? 920  
 Then paced the passage, hands clenched, head erect,  
 Pursuing his discourse ; a grand unchecked  
 Monotony made out from his quick talk  
 And the recurring noises of his walk ;  
 —Somewhat too much like the o'ercharged assent 925  
 Of two resolved friends in one danger blent,  
 Who hearten each the other against heart—  
 Boasting there's nought to care for, when, apart  
 The boaster, all's to care for : he, beside  
 Some shape not visible, in power and pride 930  
 Approached, out of the dark, ginglyngly near,  
 Nearer, passed close in the broad light, his ear  
 Crimson, eyeballs suffused, temples full fraught,  
 Just a snatch of the rapid speech you caught,  
 And on he strode into the opposite dark 935  
 Till presently the harsh heel's turn, a spark  
 I' the stone, and whirl of some loose embossed thong  
 That crashed against the angle eye so long  
 After the last, punctual to an amount  
 Of mailed great paces you could not but count, 940  
 Prepared you for the pacing back again :  
 And by the snatches might you ascertain  
 That, Friedrich's Prefecture surmounted, left  
 By this alone in Italy, they cleft  
 Asunder, crushed together, at command 945

Of none, were free to break up Hildebrand,  
 Rebuild, he and Sordello, Charlemagne—  
 But garnished, Strength with Knowledge, if we deign  
 Accept that compromise and stoop to give  
 Rome law, the Cæsars' Representative. 950  
 —Enough that the illimitable flood  
 Of triumphs after triumphs, understood  
 In its faint reflux (you shall hear) sufficed  
 Young Ecelin for appanage, enticed  
 Him till, these long since quiet in their graves, 955  
 He found 'twas looked for that a long life's braves  
 Should somehow be made good—so, weak and worn,  
 Must stagger up at Milan, one gray morn  
 Of the To-Come, to fight his latest fight.  
 But, Salinguerra's prophecy at height— 960  
 He voluble with a raised arm and stiff,  
 A blaring voice, a blazing eye, as if  
 He had our very Italy to keep  
 Or cast away, or gather in a heap  
 To garrison the better—ay, his word 965  
 Was, "run the cucumber into a gourd,  
 Drive Trent upon Apulia"—at their pitch  
 Who spied the continents and islands which  
 Grew sickles, mulberry leaflets in the map—  
 (Strange that three such confessions so should hap 970  
 To Palma Dante spoke with in the clear  
 Amorous silence of the Swooning-sphere.  
 Cunizza, as he called her! Never ask  
 Of Palma more! She sate, knowing her task  
 Was done, the labour of it—for success 975  
 Concerned not Palma, passion's votaress)  
 Triumph at height, I say, Sordello crowned—  
 Above the passage suddenly a sound  
 Stops speech, stops walk: back shrinks Taurello, bids  
 With large involuntary asking lids 980  
 Palma interpret. 'Tis his own foot-stamp—



Your hand ! His summons ! Nay, this idle damp  
 Befits not ! Out they two reeled dizzily :  
 " Visconti's strong at Milan," resumed he  
 In the old somewhat insignificant way 985  
 (Was Palma wont years afterward to say)  
 As though the spirit's flight sustained thus far  
 Dropped at that very instant. Gone they are—  
 Palma, Taurello ; Eglamor anon,  
 Ecelin, Alberic . . . ah, Naddo's gone ! 990  
 —Labours this moonrise what the Master meant  
 " Is Squarcialupo speckled ?—purulent  
 I'd say, but when was Providence put out ?  
 He carries somehow handily about  
 His spite nor foul himself ! " Goito's vines 995  
 Stand like a cheat detected—stark rough lines  
 The moon breaks through, a grey mean scale against  
 The vault where, this eve's Maiden, thou remain'st  
 Like some fresh martyr, eyes fixed—who can tell ?  
 As Heaven, now all's at end, did not so well 1000  
 Spite of the faith and victory, to leave  
 Its virgin quite to death in the lone eve :  
 While the persisting hermit-bee . . . ha ! wait  
 No longer—these in compass, forward fate !

## BOOK THE SIXTH.

THE thought of Eglamor's least like a thought,  
 And yet a false one, was, Man shrinks to nought  
 If matched with symbols of immensity—  
 Must quail, forsooth, before a quiet sky  
 Or sea, too little for their quietude: 5  
 And, truly, somewhat in Sordello's mood  
 Confirmed its speciousness while evening sank  
 Down the near terrace to the further bank,  
 And only one spot left out of the night  
 Glimmered upon the river opposite— 10  
 A breadth of watery heaven like a bay,  
 A sky-like space of water, ray for ray  
 And star for star, one richness where they mixed  
 As this and that wing of an angel, fixed,  
 Tumultuary splendors folded in 15  
 To die: nor turned he till Ferrara's din  
 (Say, the monotonous speech from a man's lip  
 Who lets some first and eager purpose slip  
 In a new fancy's birth; the speech keeps on  
 Though elsewhere its informing soul be gone) 20  
 Aroused him, surely offered succour; fate  
 Paused with this eve; ere she precipitate  
 Herself . . . put off strange after-thoughts awhile,  
 That voice, those large hands, that portentous smile. . .  
 What help to pierce the Future as the Past 25  
 Lay in the plaining city?

And at last

The main discovery and prime concern,  
 All that just now imported him to learn,  
 His truth, like yonder slow moon to complete  
 Heaven, rose again, and naked at his feet 30  
 Lighted his old life's every shift and change,  
 Effort with counter-effort; nor the range  
 Of each looked wrong except wherein it checked  
 Some other—which of these could he suspect  
 Prying into them by the sudden blaze? 35  
 The real way seemed made up of all the ways—  
 Mood after mood of the one mind in him;  
 Tokens of the existence, bright or dim,  
 Of a transcendent all-embracing sense  
 Demanding only outward influence, 40  
 A soul, in Palma's phrase, above his soul,  
 Power to uplift his power, such moon's control,  
 Over the sea-depths, and their mass had swept  
 Onward from the beginning and still kept  
 Its course; but years and years the sky above 45  
 Held none, and so, untasked of any love,  
 His sensitiveness idled, now amorn,  
 Alive now, and to sullenness or sport  
 Given wholly up, disposed itself anew  
 At every passing instigation, grew 50  
 And dwindled at caprice, in foam-showers spilt,  
 Wedge-like insisting, quivered now a gilt  
 Shield in the sunshine, now a blinding race  
 Of whitest ripples o'er the reef—found place  
 For myriad charms; not gathered up and, hurled 55  
 Right from its heart, encompassing the world.  
 So had Sordello been, by consequence,  
 Without a function: others made pretence  
 To strengths not half his own, yet had some core  
 Within, submitted to some moon, before 60  
 It still, superior still whate'er its force,

Were able therefore to fulfil a course  
 Nor missed Life's crown, authentic attribute—  
 To each who lives must be a certain fruit  
 Of having lived in his degree, a stage 65  
 Earlier or later in men's pilgrimage,  
 To stop at; and to which those spirits tend  
 Who, still discovering beauty without end,  
 Amass the scintillations for one star  
 —Something unlike them, self-sustained, afar, 70  
 And meanwhile nurse the dream of being blest  
 By winning it to notice and invest  
 Their souls with alien glory some one day  
 Whene'er the nucleus, gathering shape alway,  
 Round to the perfect circle—soon or late 75  
 According as themselves are formed to wait;  
 Whether 'tis human beauty will suffice  
 —The yellow hair and the luxurious eyes,  
 Or human intellect seem best, or each  
 Combine in some ideal form past reach 80  
 On earth, or else some shade of these, some aim,  
 Some love, hate even, take their place the same  
 That may be served—all this they do not lose,  
 Waiting for death to live, nor idly choose  
 What Hell shall be—a progress thus pursued 85  
 Through all existence, still above the food  
 That's offered them, still towering beyond  
 The widened range in virtue of their bond  
 Of sovereignty: not that a Palma's Love  
 A Salinguerra's Hate would equal prove 90  
 To swaying all Sordello: wherefore doubt,  
 Love meet for such a Strength, some Moon's  
 without  
 To match his Sea?—fear, Good so manifest,  
 Only the Best breaks faith?—but that the Best  
 Somehow eludes us ever, still might be 95  
 And is not: crave you gems? where's penury

Of their material round us? pliant earth,  
 The plastic flame—what balks the Mage his birth  
 —Jacynth in balls, or lodestone by the block?  
 Flinders enrich the strand and veins the rock— 100  
 No more! Ask creatures? Life in tempest,  
 Though.

Clothes the keen hill-top, mid-day woods are fraught  
 With fervors . . . ah, these forms are well enough—  
 But we had hoped, encouraged by the stuff  
 Profuse at Nature's pleasure, Men beyond 105  
 These Men! and thus, perchance, are over-fond  
 In arguing, from Good the Best, from force  
 Divided—force combined, an ocean's course  
 From this our sea whose mere intestine pants  
 Had seemed at times sufficient to our wants. 110  
 —External Power? If none be adequate  
 And he have been ordained (a prouder fate)  
 A law to his own sphere? the need remove  
 All incompleteness, be that law, that love?  
 Nay, really such be others' laws, though veiled 115  
 In mercy to each vision that had failed  
 If unassisted by its Want, for lure,  
 Embodied? stronger vision could endure  
 The simple want—no bauble for a truth!  
 The People were himself; and by the ruth 120  
 At their condition was he less impelled  
 To alter the discrepancy beheld  
 Than if, from the sound Whole, a sickly Part  
 Subtracted were transformed, decked out with art,  
 Then palmed on him as alien woe—the Guelf 125  
 To succour, proud that he forsook himself?  
 No: All's himself—all service, therefore, rates  
 Alike, nor serving one part, immolates  
 The rest: but all in time! That lance of yours  
 Makes havoc soon with Malek and his Moors, 130  
 That buckler's lined with many a Giant's beard

Ere long, Porphyrio, be the lance but reared,  
 The buckler wielded handsomely as now ;  
 But view your escort, bear in mind your vow,  
 Count the pale tracts of sand to pass ere that, 135  
 And, if you hope we struggle through this flat,  
 Put lance and buckler up—next half-month lacks  
 A sturdy exercise of mace or axe  
 To cleave this dismal brake of prickly-pear  
 Bristling holds Cydippe by the hair, 140  
 Lames barefoot Agathon.

Oh, People, urge

Your claims !—for thus he ventured to the verge  
 Push a vain munimery which perchance distrust  
 Of his fast-slipping resolution thrust  
 No less : accordingly the Crowd—as yet 145  
 He had unconsciously contrived forget  
 To dwell upon the points . . . one might assuage  
 The signal horrors sooner than engage  
 \*With a dim vulgar vast unobvious grief  
 Not to be fancied off, obtain relief 150  
 In brilliant fits, cured by a happy quirk,  
 But by dim vulgar vast unobvious work  
 To correspond—however, forth they stood :  
 And now content thy stronger vision, brood  
 On thy bare want ; the grave stript turf by turf, 155  
 Study the corpse-face thro' the taint-worms' scurf !  
 Down sank the People's Then ; uprose their Now.  
 These sad ones render service to ! And how  
 Piteously little must that service prove  
 —Had surely proved in any case ! for move 160  
 Each other obstacle away, let youth  
 Had been aware it had surprised a Truth  
 'Twere service to impart—can Truth be seized,  
 Settled forthwith, and of the captive eased  
 Its captor look around, since this alit 165  
 So.happily, no gesture luring it,

The earnest of a flock to follow? Vain,  
 Most vain! a life's to spend ere this he chain,  
 To the poor crowd's complacence; ere the crowd  
 Pronounce it captured he descries a cloud 170  
 Its 'kin of twice the plumage—he, in turn,  
 If he sha' live as many lives, may learn  
 Secure—not otherwise. Then Mantua called  
 Back to his mind how certain bards were thrall'd  
 —Buds blasted, but of breaths more like perfumes 175  
 Than Naddo's staring nosegay's carrion blooms  
 Could boast—some rose that burnt heart out in sweets,  
 A spendthrift in the Spring, no Summer greets—  
 Some Dularete, drunk with truths and wine,  
 Grown bestial dreaming how become divine. 180  
 Yet to surmount this obstacle, commence  
 With the commencement, merits crowning! Hence  
 Must Truth be casual Truth, elicited  
 In sparks so mean, at intervals dispread  
 So rarely, that 'tis like at no one time 185  
 Of the world's story has not Truth, the prime  
 Of Truth, the very Truth which, loosed had hurled  
 Its course aright, been really in the world  
 Content the while with some mean spark by dint  
 Of some chance-blow, the solitary hint 190  
 Of buried fire, which, rip its breast, would stream  
 Sky-ward!

Sordello's miserable gleam  
 'Was looked for at the moment: he would dash  
 This badge to earth and all it brought, abash  
 Taurello thus, perhaps persuade him wrest 195  
 The Kaiser from his purpose; would attest  
 His constancy in any case. Before  
 He dashes it, however, think once more!  
 For, was that little truly service? Ay—  
 I' the end, no doubt; but meantime? Plain you  
 spy 200

Its ultimate Effect, but many flaws  
 Of vision blur each intervening Cause;  
 Were the day's fraction clear as the life's sum  
 Of service, Now as filled as the To-come  
 With evidence of good—nor too minute 205  
 A share to vie with evil ! How dispute  
 The Guelfs were fittest maintain in rule ?  
 That made the life's work: not so easy school  
 Your day's work—say, on natures circumstanced  
 So variously, which yet, as each advanced 210  
 Or might impede that Guelf rule, it behoved  
 You, for the Then's sake, hate what Now you loved,  
 Love what you hated ; nor if one man bore  
 Brand upon temples while his fellow wore  
 The aureole, would it task us to decide— 215  
 But portioned duly out, the Future vied  
 Never with the unparcelled Present ! Smite  
 Or spare so much on warrant all so slight ?  
 The Present's complete sympathies to break,  
 Aversions bear with, for a Future's sake 220  
 So feeble ? Tito ruined through one speck,  
 The Legate saved by his sole lightish fleck ?  
 This were work, true—but work performed at cost  
 Of other work—ought gained here, elsewhere lost—  
 For a new segment spoil an orb half-done— 225  
 Rise with the People one step, and sink . . . one ?  
 Would it were one step—less than the whole fare—  
 Of things our novel duty bids erase !  
 Harms are to vanquish ; what ? the Prophet saith !  
 The Minstrel singeth vainly then ? Old faith, 230  
 Old courage, born of the surrounding harms,  
 Were not, from highest to the lowest, charms ?  
 Oh, flame persists, but is not glare as staunch ?  
 Where the salt marshes stagnate, crystals branch—  
 Blood dries to crimson—Evil's beautified 235  
 In every shape ! But Beauty thrust aside



You banish Evil: wherefore? After all  
 Is Evil our result less natural  
 Than Good? For overlook the Seasons' strife  
 With tree and flower—the hideous animal life, 240  
 Of which who seeks shall find a grinning taunt  
 For his solution, must endure the vaunt  
 Of Nature's angel, as a child that knows  
 Himself befooled, unable to propose  
 Aught better than the fooling—and but care 245  
 For Men, the varied People then and there,  
 Of which 'tis easy saying Good and Ill  
 Claim him alike! Whence rose the claim but still  
 From Ill, the fruit of Ill—what else could knit  
 Him theirs but Sorrow? Any free from it 250  
 Were also free from him! A happiness  
 Could be distinguished in this morning's press  
 Of miseries—the fool's who passed a gibe  
 On thee, said he, so wedded to his tribe  
 He carries green and yellow tokens in 255  
 His very face that he's a Ghibellin—  
 Much hold on him that fool obtained! Nay mount  
 Yet higher; and upon Men's own account  
 Must Evil stay: for what is Joy? To heave  
 Up one obstruction more, and common leave 260  
 What was peculiar—by this act destroy  
 Itself; a partial death is every joy;  
 The sensible escape, enfranchisement  
 Of a sphere's essence: once the vexed—content,  
 The cramped—at large, the growing circle—round, 265  
 All's to begin again—some novel bound  
 To break, some new enlargement's to entreat,  
 The sphere though larger is not more complete.  
 Now for Mankind's experience: who alone  
 Might style the unobstructed world his own? 270  
 Whom palled Goito with its perfect things?  
 Sordello's self; whereas for Mankind springs

Salvation—hindrances are interposed  
For them, not all Life's view at once disclosed  
To creatures sudden on its summit left 275  
With Heaven above and—yet of wings bereft  
But lower laid, as at the mountain's foot  
Where, range on range, the girdling forests shoot  
Between the prospect and the throngs who scale  
Earnestly ever, piercing veil by veil, 280  
Confirmed with each discovery; in their soul  
The Whole they seek by Parts—but, found that Whole,  
Could they revert? Oh, testify! The space  
Of time we judge so meagre to embrace  
The Parts, were more than plenty, once attained 285  
The Whole, to quite exhaust it: for nought's gained  
But leave to look—not leave to do: Beneath  
Soon sates the looker—look Above, then! Death  
Tempters ere a tithe of Life be tasted. Live  
First, and die soon enough, Sordello! Give 290  
Body and spirit the bare right they claim  
To pasture thee on a voluptuous shame  
That thou, a pageant-city's denizen,  
Are neither vilely lodged midst Lombard men—  
Canst force joy out of sorrow, seem to truck 295  
Thine attributes away for sordid muck,  
Yet manage from that very muck educe  
Gold; then subject, nor scruple, to thy cruce  
The world's discardings; think, if ingots pay  
Such pains, the clods that yielded them are clay 300  
To all save thee, and clay remain though quenched  
Thy purging-fire; who's robbed then? Would I  
wrenched  
An ample treasure forth!—As 'tis, why crave  
A share that ruins me and will not save  
Yourselves?—imperiously command I quit 305  
The course that makes my joy nor will remit  
Your woe? Would all arrive at joy? Reverse

The order (time instructs you) nor coerce  
 Each unit till, some predetermined mode,  
 The total be emancipate; our road 310  
 Is one, our times of travel many; thwart  
 No enterprising soul's precocious start  
 Before the general march; if slow or fast  
 All straggle up to the same point at last,  
 Why grudge my having gained a month ago 315  
 The brakes at balm-shed, asphodels in blow,  
 While you were landlocked? Speed your Then, but  
 how

This badge would suffer you improve my Now!  
 His time of action for, against, or with  
 Our world (I labour to extract the pith 320  
 Of this and more) grew up, that even-tide,  
 Gigantic with its power of joy beside  
 The world's eternity of impotence  
 To profit though at his whole joy's expense.  
 Make nothing of that time because so brief? 325  
 Rather make more—instead of joy take grief  
 Before its novelty have time subside;  
 No time for the late savour—leave untried  
 Virtue, the creaming honey wine, quick squeeze  
 Vice like a biting spirit from the lees 330  
 Of life—together let wrath, hatred, lust  
 All tyrannies in every shape be thrust  
 Upon this Now, which time may reason out  
 As mischiefs, far from benefits, no doubt—  
 But long ere then Sordello will have slept 335  
 Away—you teach him at Goito's crypt  
 There's a blank issue to that fiery thrill!  
 Stirring, the Few cope with the Many, still:  
 So much of dust as, quiet, makes a mass  
 Unable to produce three tufts of grass, 340  
 Shall, troubled by the whirlwind, render void  
 The whole calm glebe's endeavour: be employed!

And e'en though somewhat smarts the Crowd for this,  
 Contributes each his pang to make up bliss,  
 'Tis but one pang—one blood-drop to the bowl 345  
 Which brimful tempts the sluggish asp uncowl  
 So quick, stains ruddily the dull red cape,  
 And, kindling orbs dull as the unripe grape  
 Before, avails forthwith to disentrance  
 The mischief—soon to lead a mystic dance 350  
 Among you ! Nay, who sits alone in Rome ?  
 Have those great hands indeed hewn out a home  
 For me—compelled to live ? Oh Life, life-breath,  
 Life-blood,—ere sleep be travail, hie ere death !  
 This life to feed my soul, direct, oblique, 355  
 But always feeding ! Hindrances ? They pique—  
 Helps ? such . . . but wherefore say my soul o'ertops  
 All height—than every depth profounder drops ?  
 Enough that I can live, and would live ! Wait  
 For some transcendent life reserved by Fate 360  
 To follow this ? Oh, never ! Fate I trust  
 The same my soul to ; for, as who flings dust  
 Perchance—so facile was the deed, she chequed  
 The void with these materials to affect  
 That soul diversely—these consigned anew 365  
 To nought by death, what marvel if she threw  
 A second and superber spectacle  
 Before it ? What may serve for sun—what still  
 Wander a moon above me—what else wind  
 About me like the pleasures left behind ? 370  
 And how shall some new flesh that is not flesh  
 Cling to me ? what's new laughter—soothes the flesh  
 Sleep like sleep ? Fate's exhaustless for my sake  
 In brave resource, but whether bids she slake  
 My thirst at this first rivulet or count 375  
 No draught worth lip save from the rocky fount  
 Above i' the clouds, while here she's provident  
 Of (taste) loquacious pearl the soft tree-tent

Guards, with its face of reate and sedge, nor fail  
 The silver globules and gold-sparkling grail 380  
 At bottom—Oh, 'twere too absurd to slight  
 For the hereafter the to-day's delight !  
 Quench thou it at this, then seek next well-spring—wear  
 Home-lilies ere strange lotus in my hair !  
 Here is the Crowd, whom I with freest heart 385  
 Offer to serve, contented for my part  
 To give this life up once for all, but grant  
 I really serve ; if otherwise, why want  
 Aught further of me ? Life they cannot chuse  
 But set aside—wherefore should I refuse 390  
 The gift ? I take it—I, for one, engage  
 Never to falter through the pilgrimage—  
 Or end it howling that the stock or stone  
 Were enviable, truly : I, for one,  
 Will praise the world you style mere anteroom 395  
 To the true palace—but shall I assume  
 —My foot the courtly gait, my tongue the trope,  
 My eye the glance, before the doors fly ope  
 One moment ? What—with guarders row on row,  
 Gay swarms of varletry that come and go, 400  
 Pages to dice with, waiting-girls unlace  
 The plackets of, pert claimants help displace,  
 Heart-heavy suitors get a rank for ; laugh  
 At yon sleek parasite, break his own staff  
 'Cross Beetle-brows the Usher's shoulder ; why— 405  
 Admitted to the presence by and bye,  
 Should thought of these recurring make me grieve  
 Among new sights I reach, old sights I leave ?  
 Cool citrine-crystals, fierce pyropus-stone—  
 Bare floor-work too !—But did I let alone 410  
 That black-eyed peasant in the vestibule  
 Once and for ever ?—Floor-work ? No such fool !  
 Rather, were Heaven to forestall Earth, I'd say  
 Must I be blessed or you ? Then my own way

Bless me—a firmer arm, a fleetier foot, 415  
 I'll thank you, but to no mad wings transmute  
 These limbs of mine—our greensward is too soft ;  
 Nor camp I on the thunder-cloud aloft—  
 We feel the bliss distinctlier having thus  
 Engines subservient, not mixed up with us— 420  
 Better move palpably through Heaven—nor, freed  
 Of flesh forsooth, from space to space proceed  
 'Mid flying synods of worlds—but in Heaven's marge  
 Show Titan still, recumbent o'er his targe  
 Solid with stars—the Centaur at his game 425  
 Made tremulously out in hoary flame !

Life ! Yet the very cup whose extreme dull  
 Dregs, even, I would quaff, was dashed, at full,  
 Aside so oft ; the death I fly, revealed  
 So oft a better life this life concealed 430  
 And which sage, champion, martyr, thro' each path  
 Have hunted fearlessly—the horrid bath,  
 The crippling-irons and the fiery chair :  
 —'Twas well for them ; let me become aware  
 As they, and I relinquish Life, too ! Let 435  
 Life's secret but disclose itself ! Forget  
 Vain ordinances, I have one appeal—  
 I feel, and what I feel, know what I feel  
 —So much is Truth to me—What Is then ? Since  
 One object viewed diversely may evince 440  
 Beauty and ugliness—this way attract,  
 That way repel, why gloze upon the fact ?  
 Why must a single of the sides be right ?  
 What bids choose this and leave its opposite ?  
 No abstract Right for me—in youth endued 445  
 With Right still present, still to be pursued,  
 Thro' all the interchange of circles, rife  
 Each with its proper law and mode of life,  
 Each to be dwelt at ease in : thus to sway  
 Regally with the Kaiser, or obey 450

Implicit with his Serf of fluttering heart,  
Or, like a sudden thought of God's, to start  
Up in the presence, then go forth and shout  
That some should pick the unstrung jewels out—  
Were well

And, as in moments when the Past 455  
Gave partially enfranchisement, he cast  
Himself quite thro' mere secondary states  
Of his soul's essence, little loves and hates,  
Into the mid vague yearnings overlaid  
By these; as who should pierce hill, plain, grove,  
glade, 460

And so into the very nucleus probe  
That first determined there exist a Globe:  
And as that's easiest half the globe dissolved,  
So seemed Sordello's closing-truth evolved  
By his flesh-half's break-up—the sudden swell 465  
Of his expanding soul showed Ill and Well,  
Sorrow and Joy, Beauty and Ugliness  
Virtue and Vice, the Larger and the Less,  
All qualities, in fine, recorded here,  
Might be but Modes of Time and this one Sphere, 470  
Urgent on these but not of force to bind  
As Time—Eternity, as Matter—Mind,  
If Mind, Eternity shall choose assert  
Their attributes within a Life: thus girt  
With circumstance, next change beholds them cinct 475  
Quite otherwise—with Good and Ill distinct,  
Joys, sorrows, tending to a like result—  
Contrived to render easy, difficult,  
This or the other course of . . . what new bond  
In place of flesh may stop their flight beyond 480  
Its new sphere, as that course does harm or good  
To its arrangements. Once this understood,  
As suddenly he felt himself alone,  
Quite out of Time and this World all was known.

What made the secret of the past despair? 485  
 (Most imminent when he seemed most aware  
 Of greatness in the Past—nought turned him mad  
 Like craving to expand the power he had,  
 Not a new power to be expanded)—just  
 This made it; Soul on Matter being thrust, 490  
 'Tis Joy when so much Soul is wreaked in Time  
 On Matter,—let the Soul attempt sublime  
 Matter beyond its scheme and so prevent  
 Or more or less that deed's accomplishment,  
 And Sorrow follows: Sorrow to avoid— 495  
 Let the Employer match the thing Employed,  
 Fit to the finite his infinity,  
 And thus proceed for ever, in degree  
 Changed but in kind the same, still limited  
 To the appointed circumstance and dead 500  
 To all beyond: a sphere is but a sphere—  
 Small, Great, are merely terms we bandy here —  
 Since to the spirit's absoluteness all  
 Are like: now of the present sphere we call  
 Life, are conditions—take but this among 505  
 Many; the Body was to be so long  
 Youthful, no longer—but, since no control  
 Tied to that Body's purposes his Soul,  
 It chose to understand the Body's trade  
 More than the Body's self—had fain conveyed 510  
 Its boundless, to the body's bounded lot—  
 So, the soul permanent, the body not,—  
 Scarcely the one minute for enjoying here,  
 The soul must needs instruct its weak compeer,  
 Run o'er its capabilities and wring 515  
 A joy thence it holds worth experiencing—  
 Which, far from half discovered even,—lo,  
 The minute gone, the body's power's let go  
 Apportioned to that joy's acquirement! Broke,  
 Say, morning o'er the earth and all it woke— 520



From the volcano's vapour-flag to hoist  
 Black o'er the spread of sea, to the low moist  
 Dale's silken barley-spikes sullied with rain,  
 Swayed earthwards, heavily to rise again—  
 (The Small a sphere as perfect as the Great 525  
 To the soul's absoluteness)—meditate  
 On such an Autumn-morning's cluster-chord  
 And the whole music it was framed afford,  
 And, the chord's might discovered, what should pluck  
 One string, the finger, was found palsy-struck. 530  
 And then what marvel if the Spirit, shown  
 A saddest sight—the Body lost alone  
 Thro' its officious proffered help, deprived  
 Of this and that enjoyment Fate contrived,  
 Virtue, Good, Beauty, each allowed slip hence,— 535  
 Vaingloriously were fain, for recompense,  
 To stem the ruin even yet, protract  
 The Body's term, supply the power it lacked  
 From its infinity, compel it learn  
 These qualities were only Time's concern, 540  
 That Body may, with its assistance, barred—  
 Advance the same, vanquished—obtain reward,  
 Reap joy where sorrow was intended grow,  
 Of Wrong made Right and turn Ill Good below—  
 And the result is, the poor Body soon 545  
 Sinks under what was meant a wondrous boon,  
 Leaving its bright accomplice all aghast.  
 So much was plain then, proper in the Past ;  
 To be complete for, satisfy the whole  
 Series of spheres—Eternity, his soul 550  
 Exceeded, so was incomplete for, each  
 One sphere—our Time. But does our knowledge  
 reach  
 No farther ? Is the cloud of hindrance broke  
 But by the failing of the fleshly yoke,  
 Its loves and hates, as now when they let soar 555

The spirit, self-sufficient as before,  
Tho' but the single space that shall elapse  
'Twixt its enthrallment in new bonds perhaps?  
Must Life be ever but escaped, which should  
Have been enjoyed? nay, might have been and  
would, 560  
Once ordered rightly, and a Soul's no whit  
More than the Body's purpose under it  
(A breadth of watery heaven like a bay,  
A sky-like space of water, ray for ray  
And star for star, one richness where they mixed 565  
As this and that wing of an angel, fixed,  
Tumultuary splendours folded in  
To die) and which thus, far from first begin  
Exciting discontent, but surest quelled  
The Body if aspiring it rebelled. 570  
But how so order Life? Still brutalize  
The soul, the sad world's method—muffled eyes  
To all that was before, shall after be  
This sphere—and every other quality  
Save some sole and immutable Great and Good 575  
And Beauteous whither fate has loosed its hood  
To follow? Never may some soul see All  
—The Great before and after and the Small  
Now, yet be saved by this the simplest lore,  
And take the single course prescribed before, 580  
As the king-bird with ages on his plumes  
Travels to die in his ancestral glooms?  
But where descry the Love that shall select  
That course? Here is a Soul whom to affect  
Nature has plied with all her means—from trees 585  
And flowers—e'en to the Multitude . . . and these  
Decides he save or no? One word to end!  
Ah my Sordello, I this once befriend  
And speak for you. A Power above him still  
Which, utterly incomprehensible, 590

Is out of rivalry, which thus he can  
 Love, tho' unloving all conceived by Man—  
 What need ! And of—none the minutest duct  
 To that out-Nature, nought that would instruct  
 And so let rivalry begin to live— 595  
 But of a Power its representative  
 Who, being for authority the same,  
 Communication different, should claim  
 A course the first chose and this last revealed—  
 This Human clear, as that Divine concealed— 600  
 The utter need !

What has Sordello found ?  
 Or can his spirit go the mighty round  
 At length, end where our souls begun ? as says  
 Old fable, the two doves were sent two ways  
 About the world—where in the midst they met 605  
 Tho' on a shifting waste of sand, men set  
 Jove's temple ? Quick, what has Sordello found ?  
 For they approach—approach—that foot's rebound . .  
 Palma ? No, Salinguerra tho' in mail ;  
 They mount, have reached the threshold, dash the  
 veil 610

Aside—and you divine who sat there dead  
 Under his foot the badge ; still, Palma said,  
 A triumph lingering in the wide eyes  
 Wider than some spent swimmer's if he spies  
 Help from above in his extreme despair, 615  
 And, head far back on shoulder thrust, turns there  
 With short quick passionate cry ; as Palma prest  
 In one great kiss her lips upon his breast  
 It beat. By this the hermit-bee has stopped  
 His day's toil at Goito—the new-cropped 620  
 Dead vine-leaf answers, now 'tis eve, he bit,  
 Twirled so, and filed all day—the mansion's fit—  
 God counselled for ; as easy guess the word  
 That passed betwixt them and become the third

To the soft small unfrighted bee, as tax 625  
 Him with one fault—so no remembrance racks  
 Of the stone maidens and the font of stone  
 He, creeping thro' the crevice, leaves alone—  
 Alas, my friend—Alas Sordello ! whom  
 Anon we laid within that cold font-tomb— 630  
 And yet again alas !

And now is't worth  
 Our while bring back to mind, much less set forth  
 How Salingueira extricates himself  
 Without Sordello ? Ghibellin and Guelf  
 May fight their fiercest ? If Count Richard sulked 635  
 In durance, or the Marquis paid his mulct,  
 Who cares, Sordello gone ? The upshot, sure,  
 Was peace ; our chief made some frank overture  
 That prospered ; compliment fell thick and fast  
 On its disposer, and Taurello passed 640  
 With foe and friend for an outstripping soul  
 Nine days at least : then, fairly reached the goal,  
 He, by one effort, blotted the great hope  
 Out of his mind, no further tried to cope  
 With Este that mad evening's style, but sent 645  
 Away the Legate and the League, content  
 No blame at least the brothers had incurred,  
 —Despatched a message to the Monk he heard  
 Patiently first to last, scarce shivered at,  
 Then curled his limbs up on his wolfskin mat 650  
 And ne'er spoke more,—informed the Ferrareses  
 He but retained their rule so long as these  
 Lingered in pupilage—and last, no mode  
 Apparent else of keeping safe the road  
 From Germany direct to Lombardy 655  
 For Friedrich, none, that is, to guarantee  
 The faith and promptitude of who should next  
 Obtain Sofia's dowry, sore perplexed—  
 (Sofia being youngest of the tribe

Of daughters Ecelin was wont to bribe 660  
 The envious magnates with—nor since he sent  
 Enrico Egna this fair child had Trent  
 Once failed the Kaiser's purposes—we lost  
 Egna last year, and who takes Egna's post—  
 Opens the Lombard gate if Friedrich knock?) 665  
 Himself espoused the Lady of the Rock  
 In pure necessity, and so destroyed  
 His slender last of chances, quite made void  
 Old prophecy, and spite of all the schemes  
 Overt and covert, youth's deeds, age's dreams, 670  
 Was sucked into Romano : and so hushed  
 He up this evening's work, that when, 'twas brushed  
 Somehow against by a blind chronicle  
 Which, chronicling whatever woe befell  
 Ferrara, scented this the obscure woe 675  
 And "Salinguerra's sole son Giacomo  
 Deceased, fatuous and doting, ere his Sire,"  
 The townsfolk rubbed their eyes, could but admire  
 Which of Sofia's five he meant. The chaps  
 Of his dead hope were tardy to collapse, 680  
 Obliterated not the beautiful  
 Distinctive features at a crash—scarce dull  
 Next year, as Azzo, Boniface withdrew  
 Each to his stronghold ; then (securely 'twas  
 Ecelin at Campese slept—close by 685  
 Who likes may see him in Solagna lie  
 With cushioned head and gloved hand to denote  
 The Cavalier he was)—then his heart smote  
 Young Ecelin conceive ! Long since adult,  
 And, save Vicenza's business, what result 690  
 In blood and blaze ? so hard 'twas intercept  
 Sordello till Sordello's option. Slept  
 Its lord on Lombardy—for in the nick  
 Of time when he at last and Alberic  
 Closed with Taurello, came precisely news 695

- That in Verona half the souls refuse  
 Allegiance to the Marquis and the Count—  
 Have cast them from a throne they bid him mount,  
 • Their Podestà, thro' his ancestral worth :  
 Ecelin flew there, and the town henceforth 700  
 Was wholly his—Taurello sinking back  
 From temporary station to a track  
 That suited : news received of this acquist,  
 Friedrich did come to Lombardy—who missed  
 Taurello? Yet another year—they took 705  
 Vicenza, left the Marquis scarce a nook  
 For refuge, and, when hundreds two or three  
 After conspired to call themselves “the Five,”  
 Opposing Alberic, these Bassanese,  
 (Without Sordello!)—Ecelin at ease 710  
 Slaughtered them so observably that oft  
 A little Salinguerra looked with soft  
 Blue eyes up, asked his sire the proper age  
 To get appointed his proud uncle's page :  
 More years passed, and that sire was dwindled  
 down 715  
 To a mere showy turbulent soldier, grown  
 Better through age, his parts still in repute,  
 Subtle—how else?—but hardly so astute  
 As his contemporaneous friends professed—  
 Undoubtedly a brawler—for the rest, 720  
 Known by each neighbour, so allowed for, let  
 Keep his incorrigible ways, nor fret  
 Men who had missed their boyhood's bugbear—trap  
 The ostrich, suffer our bald osprey flap  
 A battered pinion—was the word. In fine, 725  
 One flap too much and Venice's marine  
 Was meddled with ; no overlooking that !  
 We captured him in his Ferrara, fat  
 And florid at a banquet, more by fraud  
 Than force, to speak the truth—there's slender laud 730

Ascribed you for assisting eighty years  
 To pull his death on such a man—fate shears  
 The life-cord prompt enough whose last fine threads  
 You fritter: —, presiding his board-head,  
 A great smile, our assurance all went well 735  
 With Friedrich (as it he were like to tell !)  
 In rushed (a plan contrived before) our friends,  
 Made some pretence at fighting, just amends  
 For the shame done his eighty years—apart  
 The principle, none found it in his heart 740  
 To be much angry with Taurello—gained  
 Our galleys with the prize, and what remained  
 But carry him to Venice for a show?  
 —Set him, as 'twere, down gently—free to go  
 His gait, inspect our square, pretend observe 745  
 The swallows soaring their eternal curve  
 'Twixt Theodore and Mark, if citizens  
 Gathered importunately, fives and tens,  
 To point their children the Magnifico,  
 All but a monarch once in sum-land, go 750  
 His gait among them now—it took, indeed,  
 Fully this Ecelin to supersede  
 That man, remarked the seniors. Singular  
 Sordello's inability to bat  
 Rivals the stage, that evening, mainly last night 755  
 About by his strange disbeliefs that aught  
 Was to be done, should fairly thrust the 'Twain  
 Under Taurello's tutelage, that, brain  
 And heart and hand, be forthwith in one rod  
 Indissolubly bound to baffle God 760  
 Who loves the world—should thus allow the thin  
 Grey wizened dwarfish devil Ecelin,  
 And massy-muscled big-boned Alberic  
 (Mere man, alas) to put his problem quick  
 To demonstration—prove wherever's will 765  
 To do, there's plenty to be done, or ill

Or good : anointed, then, to rend and rip—  
 Kings of the gag and flesh-hook, screw and whip,  
 They plagued the world : a touch of Hildebrand  
 (So far from obsolete !) made Lombards band 770  
 Together, cross their coats as for Christ's cause,  
 And saving Milan win the world's applause.  
 Ecelin perished : and I think grass grew  
 Never so pleasant as in Valley Rù  
 By San Zenon where Alberic in turn 775  
 Saw his exasperated captors burn  
 Seven children with their mother, and, regaled  
 So far, tied on to a wild horse, was traile'd  
 To death through raunce and bramble-bush : I take  
 God's part and testify that mid the brake 780  
 Wild o'er his castle on Zenone's knoll  
 You hear its one tower left, a belfry, toll—  
 Chirrup the contumacious grasshopper,  
 Rustles the lizards and the cushats chirre  
 Above the ravage : there, at deep of day 785  
 A week since, heard I the old Canon say  
 He saw with his own eyes a barrow burst  
 And Alberic's huge skeleton unheard  
 Five years ago, no more : he added, June's  
 A month for carding off our first cocoons 790  
 The silkworms fabricate—a double new,  
 Nor he nor I could tell the worthier. Choose !  
 And Naddo gone, all's gone ; not Eglamor !  
 Believe I knew the face I waited for,  
 A guest my spirit of the golden courts : 795  
 Oh strange to see how, despite ill-reports,  
 Disuse, some wear of years, that face retained  
 Its joyous look of love ! Suns waxed and waned,  
 And still my spirit held an upward flight,  
 Spiral on spiral, gyres of life and light 800  
 More and more gorgeous—ever that face there  
 The last admitted ! crossed, too, with some care



As perfect triumph were not sure for all,  
 But on a few enduring damp must fall,  
 A transient struggle, haply a painful sense 805  
 Of the inferior nature's clinging—whence  
 Slight starting tears easily wiped away,  
 Fine jealousies soon stifled in the play  
 Of irrepressible admiration—not  
 Aspiring, all considered, to their lot 810  
 Who ever, just as they prepare ascend  
 Spiral on spiral, wish thee well, impend  
 Thy frank delight at their exclusive track,  
 That upturned servid face and hair put back !  
 Is there no more to say ? He of the rhymes— 815  
 Many a tale of this retreat betimes  
 Was born : Sordello die at once for men ?  
 The Chroniclers of Mantua tired their pen  
 Relating how a Prince Visconti saved  
 Mantua and elsewhere notably behaved— 820  
 Who thus by fortune's ordering events  
 Passed with posterity to all intents  
 For just the God he never could become :  
 As Knight, Bard, Gallant, men were never dumb  
 In praise of him : while what he should have been, 825  
 Could be, and was not—the one step too mean  
 For him to take, we suffer at this day  
 Because of ; Ecelin had pushed away  
 Its chance ere Dante could arrive to take  
 That step Sordello spurned, for the world's sake : 830  
 He did much—but Sordello's step was gone.  
 Thus had Sordello ta'en that step alone,  
 Apollo had been compassed—'twas a fit  
 He wished should go to him, not he to it  
 —As one content to merely be supposed 835  
 Singing or fighting elsewhere, while he dozed  
 Really at home—one who was chiefly glad  
 To have achieved the few real deeds he had

Because that way assured they were not worth  
 Doing, so spared from doing them henceforth— 840  
 A tree that covets fruitage and yet tastes  
 Never itself, itself—had he embraced  
 Their cause then, Men had plucked Hesperian fruit  
 And, praising that, just thrown him in to boot  
 All he was anxious to appear but scarce 845  
 Solicitous to be : a sorry farce  
 Such life is after all—cannot I say  
 He lived for some one better thing? this way—  
 Lo, on a heathy brown and nameless hill  
 By sparkling Asolo, in mist and chill, 850  
 Morning just up, higher and higher runs  
 A child barefoot and rosy—See ! the sun's  
 On the square castle's inner-court's green wall  
 —Like the chine of some fossil animal  
 Half turned to earth and flowers; and thro' the  
     haze 855  
 (Save where some slender patches of grey maize  
 Are to be overleaped) that boy has crost  
 The whole hill-side of dew and powder-frost  
 Matting the balm and mountain camomile:  
 Up and up goes he, singing all the while 860  
 Some unintelligible words to beat  
 The lark, God's poet, swooning at his feet  
 So worsted is he at the few fine locks  
 Stained like pale honey oozed from topmost rocks  
 Sunblanched the livelong summer.—All that's left 865  
 Of the Goito lay ! And thus bereft,  
 Sleep and forget, Sordello . . . in effect  
 He sleeps, the feverish poet—I suspect  
 Not utterly companionless ; but, friends,  
 Wake up ; the ghost's gone, and the story ends 870  
 I'd fain hope, sweetly—seeing, peri or ghoul,  
 That spirits are conjectured fair or foul,  
 Evil or good, judicious authors think,

According as they vanish in a stink  
Or in a perfume : friends be frank ; ye snuff 875  
Civet, I warrant : really ? Like enough—  
Merely the savour's rareness—any nose  
May ravage with impunity a rose—  
Rife a musk-pod and 'twill ache like yours :  
I'd tell you that same pungency ensures 880  
An after-gust, but that were overbold :  
Who would has heard Sordello's story told.

THE END.

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